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THE TRUTH ABOUT FASTING

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THE TRUTH ABOUT FASTING

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO

FASTING-COMMUNION

BY

PERCY DEARMER

RIVINGTONS
34 *KING STREET, COVENT GARDEN*
LONDON
1928

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PREFACE

IN considering the harsh and distressing controversies about this subject, it is a consolation to reflect that our common ground is much greater than our differences of opinion. We all agree that temperance and self-discipline are necessary to a virtuous as to a healthy life. We agree that in all things we should follow so far as we are able the example of Christ. We agree that it is good for Christians to receive the Holy Communion together; we desire to see that reception more general among the people and more frequent; and, because in that service we commemorate not the life only, but in a special way the passion and death of our Lord, we recognise that it should be prepared for by special temperance and self-control. We agree also that any way of preparation should be not a hindrance but a help to the reception of grace, whether by others or by ourselves. And further we agree that respect is due to all reasonable practices, and they are many, which have been in various ages adopted *in honorem tanti sacramenti*. We may differ as to the value of Christian experience in the matter, because the argument cuts both ways, and because there is much in the history of Christendom that is a falling away from Christ, as well as much that has been loyal to him; but at least we must agree to treat with understanding and sympathy

those who make progress through methods different from our own ; and if, in the zeal of investigation and in reaction against the falsities enveloping this subject, I have failed in patience and should offend any who may read these pages, I ask them at the outset to forgive and excuse me.

The subject is a very practical one, and is indeed urgent,—if it be not, as I believe it is, a matter of life and death for the Church, and for the future of religion among the freedom-loving English-speaking peoples. But grave differences of opinion exist ; and, rightly or wrongly, there are many who think it best to communicate late and many who make great sacrifices to communicate early. We may regret that the customs of Church people were disturbed in the nineteenth century, saying again with S. Augustine (in the letter so often quoted on this subject)—*Ipsa quippe mutatio consuetudinis, etiam quae adjuvat utilitate, novitate perturbat. Quapropter quae utilis non est perturbatione infructuosâ consequenter noxia est* ; but the changes were made, and the parish priest has nowadays in many parishes to provide for two kinds of communicants. We agree, at least most of us, that it is his duty to provide services at those hours when people can or will come, early as well as late.

Lastly, we are agreed about the sacramental principle which is involved in such matters as these, namely, that outward things rightly used become the means of inward and spiritual grace. Formal observances are outward things also ; and though we learn from the Gospels how

great an obstacle they may become when treated as of importance in themselves, yet we know also of how great utility they are in their right place. Such rules or customs must indeed be distinguished from the sacraments which they are intended to subserve ; but true sacramentalism would combine them with the principle of liberty. For indeed our differences are often due to the truth being bigger than our minds : the freedom of the Spirit is fundamental to Christianity, yet regularity, ' methodism ' of observance, and some measure of sound ceremonial, are necessary to a well-ordered life. It is not impossible to combine them ; nor, with so much agreement already, should it be difficult for us to understand one another.

PERCY DEARMER.

King's College, London, 1928.

CONTENTS

PAGE

PREFACE v

CHAPTER

I. The Practical Difficulties 1
The Sunday Morning Services 2
The Decrease of Communicants . . . 6
The Devotional Aspect 9

II. The Teaching and Example of Christ . . 14

III. The Apostolic and Sub-Apostolic Age . . 19
The Agapè-Eucharist 19
Penitential Fasting 25

IV. Introductory to the Historical Evidence . 29
The Little Books 29
Two Points 32
Different Meanings of 'Fasting' . . . 33

V. The Forgeries. 37
S. Clement, *c.* A.D. 96 37
Bishop Soter, A.D. 170 38
Council of Nicaea, A.D. 325 38
The So-called Canons of Hippolytus . . . 38
Bishop Timothy of Alexandria, A.D. 385 . . 39
S. Chrysostom, *c.* A.D. 400 40

VI. The Mistake about Pliny 42

VII. Tertullian, Cyprian, and the Hours of Service 48
Tertullian, *c.* A.D. 200 48
Cyprian, A.D. 350 50
The Hours of the Service 51
Afternoon and Evening Communions . . 52

CHAPTER PAGE

VIII. Early Church Orders 54
The Reception of Milk and Honey . . . 54
The Egyptian Church Order and the Verona Fragment 55
Testamentum Domini 56

IX. The Fourth Century 57
S. Ambrose, A.D. 374 57
S. Basil, *c.* A.D. 370 58
S. Gregory Nazianzen, A.D. 370 . . . 59

X. The Fourth Century: Chrysostom and Others 61
S. Chrysostom, A.D. 347-407 61
Theophilus of Alexandria, A.D. 412 . . . 63
S. Epiphanius, *c.* A.D. 400 64
Egyptian Ascetics, 4th Century . . . 65

XI. S. Augustine of Hippo 67
The Council at Hippo in 392 67
Augustine's Letter to Januarius . . . 70
The True Significance of Augustine's Letter . 74

XII. The Fifth Century 79
Evening Communion in Egypt, *c.* A.D. 460 . 79
Pseudo-Hippolytus, 4th to 6th Century . . 81
S. Isidore of Seville, *c.* A.D. 600 . . . 83

XIII. Later Local Councils, etc. 84
Priscillianism: Braga, A.D. 563; Braga, A.D. 572 . 84
Frankish Drunkenness: Auxerre; Mâcon . 87
Toledo, A.D. 646 88
Trullo, A.D. 692 88
Anglo-Saxon Habits: Theodore; Tenth-Century Laws 89

XIV. Before the Transition 93
Walafrid Strabo, A.D. 850 93
Council at Seligenstadt, A.D. 1022 . . . 94

CHAPTER PAGE

XV. The Beginning of Fasting-Communion . . 95
Evidence of the Ablutions, 11th to 13th Century 95
The Transition: Peter Lombard; Gratian;
The Gratian Commentary 98

XVI. The Rule Established 101
S. Thomas Aquinas, A.D. 1270 101
Later Roman Catholic Action 103

XVII. After the Reformation in England . . 105
The Prayer Book and Canons 105
Convocation 107
Post-Reformation Instances 108
The Tractarians 113

APPENDIX. Augustine's Letter to Januarius:
Text and Translation 116
The Relevant Passage from Ambrose . . 126

INDEX 129

CHAPTER I

THE PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES

TO the ordinary Englishman the subject of fasting, especially in connection with the Holy Communion, may seem too unimportant to be worth writing about, and the arguments in defence of it too irrelevant to Christian ideals for contradiction to be necessary. But those who are more intimately acquainted with the Church of England know well that certain ideas have bitten so deep into many minds as to be a serious problem in our midst. Owing to a widespread belief, created during the nineteenth century by a series of historical misunderstandings, that fasting-communion was an Apostolic and Primitive practice, binding upon the whole Church and upon members of the Church of England to-day, many have preached it for years past as a necessary part of the Christian faith, and many are endeavouring at this day to enforce it. This has not only an unfortunate effect upon the minds of those who accept that belief, but, if it is allowed to spread, may lead to a further and perhaps final alienation of the people from the Church. That plain danger had been pressing me towards a reconsideration of the subject for some years; but it was when I was asked to write a paper on the apparently insoluble problem of the Sunday morning services that I was finally obliged to study the subject more closely; and then to my intense astonish-

ment I found that the rule upon which so much stress had been laid was based upon a chain of ' testimonies,' each of which, on examination, proved to be unable to bear the burden which was placed upon them.

It may be as well to take three aspects of the subject first, and in this order :—The Sunday morning services, The decrease of communicants, The spiritual results.

The Sunday Morning Services

The old-fashioned Sunday morning offered no difficulties : Morning Prayer was said at eleven, followed by the Litany and the Ante-Communion Service ; and on some occasions this was followed by the rest of the Communion Service, for which some ' stayed behind.' That system was rooted in the customs of the people ; but it had grave defects. It had grown up because of the infrequency of communion in a nation of communicants : the Ante-Communion Service, which should have been the exception, had become the norm, because the people had never recovered from the pre-Reformation custom of very infrequent communion. Thus a composite ' Morning Service ' consisting of two and a half services had taken the place of the Prayer Book system of three services—Mattins first, followed by the Litany as a prelude to the third, the administration of the Holy Communion. The dislocation of the Communion Service destroyed its beauty and devotional power ; the custom of ' staying behind ' led to the idea that regular monthly communion was a peculiarity for the few, while the resultant jumble of two and a half services, with its shapeless want of point and its many repetitions, produced a service too long-drawn for modern ideas. By

the middle of the nineteenth century a gradual and sympathetic reform was urgently needed.

Unfortunately, that reform was accompanied by many innovations which broke the traditional spirit upon which all popular religion is based. The churches were refurbished and 'restored' till their old home-like beauty was destroyed: the parish clerk, the village-band, the mixed choir, the old music, the old customs were abolished; and the bewildered people in one parish after another were told that they ought not to communicate at noon, but must come to the newly invented 'early Celebration'[1] at eight in the morning, an hour which to the great majority of our people is almost impossible. This was because of the introduction of fasting-communion, which has now been taught with great and insistent earnestness for two or three generations, till even at Evangelical gatherings an early Celebration has come to be taken for granted.

The effect upon the people was disastrous. In many parishes the innovating clergy did indeed persuade some women of the upper and middle classes to agree with them, and a few men. But the people as a whole stood aloof; and the spectacle has become common of an early service at which in a parish of many thousands there are present some twenty women and two or three men, with the working classes unrepresented except for a few servant girls. For three-quarters of a century or more, sacramental teaching has been most strenuously im-

[1] 'Mid-day Communions,' wrote Dr. Pusey in 1879, 'used to be the rule among us. The early Communions of late years date from the revival of about 1833, except in towns on great Festivals. And it is a difficulty affecting thousands of Clergy throughout the country.' *Spiritual Letters of Edward Bouverie Pusey*, ed. J. O. Johnston and W. C. E. Newbolt, 1898, p. 273. The introduction of early Communions was very gradual at first.

parted ; and yet the young people of this country (and of all countries) come less to the Holy Communion than ever before. And now the help which devoted women have given in the past is becoming less, because the modern girl is educated like the modern boy and shares his independence: neither sex in the future will be amenable to clerical exhortation, unless they are convinced of its truth.

In country villages especially—and they are the heart of England—the effect of insisting upon fasting-communion and the early Celebration has been disastrous. In many parishes the Vicarage supplies the congregation, in some that I know the priest is normally alone. Confirmation candidates are told they must come early : they come at first, and are chilled by finding, instead of an Apostolic communion and fellowship of enthusiastic believers, a nearly empty church from which their fathers, and indeed their mothers also, are most conspicuously absent: communion seems to them something strange and forlorn, and they avoid it as soon as they can. The result in many places of the insistence upon fasting-communion is that the people acquire a vague idea that the parson dislikes their coming at noon, and therefore do not come at all. And the traditional mid-day Celebration, at which once the whole village used to communicate three times in the year, and some folk every month, is now confined to a few old people who are gradually dying out.

Meanwhile the order of the Prayer Book is perfectly clear. The Holy Communion does not precede Mattins, but follows it. To substitute a sung Eucharist at eleven for Mattins can succeed only in a few exceptional churches ; to discourage communion at such a service is

theologically unsound and a violation of our Liturgy. But the normal churchman—and he is in a vast majority—is just as determined as ever to have Morning Prayer at eleven, in spite of all the pressure of recent years. And he is right. The place of the Eucharist is after Mattins. To push Mattins to an unfrequented hour is liturgically wrong, and it is still more mistaken both liturgically and devotionally to push the Eucharist to an unfrequented hour—a proceeding which would not have been contemplated had it not been for this inhibition about fasting-communion.

Early Celebrations ought certainly to continue wherever they are wanted ; and on week-days no other time is generally practicable. But, like Evening Communions, they are additional services only. The normal Eucharist is after Mattins : this is the order of the Prayer Book and of all liturgical tradition, and is the only order that has ever commended itself to the English-speaking people as a whole.

Once, then, we cease to be trammelled by ideas about fasting, the difficulties which so continually baffle the clergy and offend the laity about the Sunday morning services completely disappear. Mattins is at the usual hour of eleven : it is followed by the Holy Communion, and before the Holy Communion the Litany (made optional in the New Book) may be said or sung. The New Book also renders all three services more practicable by avoiding repetitions and allowing convenient adjustments. Additional Celebrations may be at any time of the day ; but eight o'clock in the morning is not in practice the best time in a normal church for an additional service ; a later hour is better.

When people say that the Eucharist should be, accord-

ing to primitive tradition, the central service of the Church, they are right; but they sometimes forget that the primitive service is one at which the people communicate.

The Decrease of Communicants

Infrequency of communion began to develop as the idea of a sacred meal of fellowship faded away before the idea of a set service, preceded—not indeed for a thousand years by fasting-communion but—by acts of asceticism and penance. Already in the fourth century S. Chrysostom often laments this infrequency; but so long as the Church was powerful enough to enforce obedience, the falling-away could not develop into an actual decrease in the number of communicants. Ages before fasting-communion was thought of, the idea of previous fasting as a preparation for communion (as in Lent) was well established. Confession became compulsory in the eighth and ninth centuries, till at length the rule was established by the Lateran Council of 1215 that every one must confess once a year to the parish priest or his deputy. Compulsory confession was doubtless the greater of the obstacles to communion which have ended in defeating the purpose of the Sacrament, and it is significant that the Lateran Council of 1215 had to be content with requiring communion only once a year.

Fasting-communion among the laity seems to have become general partly as a result of infrequent communion, and then to have assisted compulsory confession in making communion rarer still. The chief dates which mark this decadence are:—

506. The Council of Agde in Narbonne required people to communicate three times a year.

1215. The Lateran Council is content with trying to enforce communion at Easter. So universal was this minimum that in England before the Reformation the houselling cloths used for the communion of the people were called 'Easter towels'; [1] and in

1549. The Articles of the Devonshire Rebels included one as follows:—'We will have the mass in Latin as was before, and celebrated by the priest without any man or woman communicating with him. . . . We will have the sacrament of the altar but at Easter delivered to the lay-people, and then but in one kind.' [2] Infrequent communion had become a kind of church principle.

At the Reformation, a strong attempt was made to restore communion, and for a minimum the Reformers went behind the Lateran Council to the principle of thrice a year, which had been formulated at Agde, Tours, and elsewhere in earlier ages. The Prayer Book system did not secure universal frequent communions, but communion once a month—almost unknown for the laity before the Reformation—became common, as it still is. There was still much to deplore, but the English were a nation of communicants. The Test Act (which was in force from 1673 to 1828) shows that it could be generally taken for granted that a man communicated

[1] See *e.g.* the *Edwardian Inventories for Bucks* (under Beaconsfield, Eddlesborough, and Slapton), 1552 (ed. F. C. Eeles, Alcuin Club, 1908, pp. 53, 67, 70), and the *Edwardian Inventories for Hunts* (ed. S. C. Lomax, Alcuin Club, 1906, p. 14).

[2] Archbishop Cranmer, *Works*, Parker Society, II., pp. 169, 173. In 1509 the devout Lady Margaret, the patroness of English learning, was regarded as a marvel in that she communicated 'fullnigh a dozen times a year.' L. Pullan, *History of the Book of Common Prayer*, p. 44, London, 1900.

either in church or chapel, and the old-fashioned chalices and flagons still bear witness to the large number of communicants in former times. The Test Act was wrong in principle, and so was the exclusiveness of the universities; but both bear witness to the fact that the normal Englishman was a communicant generally: indeed, those to-day who can remember the mid-Victorian era can testify how general communion was among what was still the enormously large church-going class.

Since then the duty of communion has been preached with unprecedented vigour in an age of great sacramental revival; but the number of communicants has steadily decreased, and among our younger people is now diminishing with a new rapidity. In the reign of Queen Anne most Englishmen were communicants; at the present day the number is reduced to about seven per cent.;[1] and I fear our own personal experience makes it highly probable that not more than about one per cent. are grown men.

There is, of course, more than one cause for this; but the discouragement in so many quarters of midday communion, and the relegation of services for communion to an early hour when few men and only a small proportion of women attend, have been powerful factors in the loss. Perhaps it is only the village clergy with an intimate knowledge of an entire population who can realise how much the discouragement of late communion leads to the decrease of communion altogether. In towns

[1] The figures for England in the *Official Year Book of the Church of England*, 1928, p. 358, are:—Easter Communicants, 2,510,037, which is 7·093 per cent. of the population (35,389,993) of the census of 1921. The Bishop of Southwark stated in 1927 that the communicants in his diocese were 116,000, out of a population of 2,500,000, or less than five per cent. *The Times*, Nov. 3rd, 1927.

there is a continual temptation to forget the population as a whole, and to take for granted the disappearance of Sunday School children as they grow up. Enormous pains have been taken by devoted parsons all over the country; but everywhere they are asking themselves, 'What has become of the children we prepared?'

The Devotional Aspect

Many devout people are convinced that fasting-communion is a necessary help to their proper reception of the Holy Sacrament; and no one would wish to interfere with their feelings upon this sacred subject. It is only when they endeavour to press this sentiment upon others that we are obliged to point out some of the difficulties, and we have to begin by asking them whether they have tried both ways. If they have not, they have no grounds for saying that one custom is better than another. Indeed, what we read of devout communicants in the eighteenth century makes us wonder if such intensity of preparation and awe has ever been surpassed.

The custom of the English Church has been to avoid all confusion of material with spiritual things, and to treat the condition of the stomach as irrelevant to a spiritual act like communion; leaving the communicant free to be in whatever bodily condition is best for his mental well-being. The most devotional condition is for the body to be normal and at rest, disturbing the mind as little as possible; and the best spiritual work is done by men whose bodies are adequately and temperately nourished: no one, indeed, would suggest that a philosopher, theologian, or poet does his most inspired thinking before he has broken his fast. There may be

some who are at their best in that condition : there are certainly many, as we all know, who are faint, or light-headed, or irritable, especially if they have walked some way in the open air—as the clergy do not so often have to do. The number of people who are not at their best is likely to increase ; for our nerves (which are so closely bound up with the digestive process) are more highly strung than those of our ancestors, who were nearer to that life of intermittent fasting and gorging which was inevitable to primitive man.

We have no right to criticise those who find fasting reception a spiritual help. People will always express their sense of reverence in different ways ; and we have only to pray that all of us will follow S. Paul's advice in not judging others. A number of good people a hundred years ago received the communion fasting ; but they did no harm to others, and they did not disturb the Church. It is only when priests officially teach fasting as a rule which all must follow, or when they say that to communicate in the manner of the Apostles is 'irreverent,' that the duty of speaking out becomes urgent. To say that communion after food is irreverent is to exhibit a deep mental confusion, and must be due to an outcrop of that materialism which each of us inherits from a remote past. Let it be plainly said that reverence is a condition of the mind and not of the stomach, and that it is not the belly which receives the Sacrament. To think otherwise is indeed to be irreverent ; but such thoughts are often expressed, although they would be repudiated by responsible theologians of every school of thought.

A priest with many years' experience as a missioner urged me to write this book, and another diocesan

missioner, whose name also would command the highest respect, hearing of this investigation, has sent me the following notes of his experience in the matter :—

'My work,' he says, 'has brought home to me in a startling way the real dangers into which we are rapidly drifting. The practical results are manifesting themselves in deplorable ways. 1. There are thousands of all ages who for physiological reasons are unable to go fasting. 2. There are thousands, engaged in agriculture, or toiling in small houses with no servants and a number of little children to look after, who are debarred from getting to church till midday or until the evening. 3. There are devoted priests who have so sapped their mental energy by the strain of keeping a fast till midday, that (*a*) they are quite incapable of preaching a proper sermon, and degenerate into a string of childish platitudes, (*b*) they stop in bed till the midday service, throwing an unnecessary burden on their colleagues for the earlier services and the Sunday Schools. 4. There are numbers of people who have cut themselves off from the greatest means of grace for fear of "sin."—I am aware that the psychological inhibitions of the clerical unconscious are formidable beyond expression. It may be too late: the herd-instinct and tradition are so strong. But for the sake of truth I wish you my blessing, to stem the tide before the ship goes on the rock. I am appalled at what I have seen and known, and saddened beyond words to express.'

And what of the effect of the *idea* upon our souls? I myself can testify—and how many a reader of these lines will bear me out!—how easily the ceremonial avoidance of food makes a profound appeal—difficult to affect by reason—to the Pharisee within each of us, and how easily

we can revert to the system of *tabus* which is the religion of primitive man. We know that this is evil. Over and over again the supporters of fasting-communion have stated that there is nothing wrong in communicating after food, *in itself*, and that there is nothing irreverent.[1] Yet human nature being what it is, the same writers will say that it is 'unrefined,' 'disgusting,' 'profane,' and indeed a mortal sin which, if not confessed, brings the punishment of unending torment.[2] We know that these ideas are silly, but a very large number of clergy, many women, and even a few laymen are under their influence, without knowing why.

It was once said that a man who can believe that it is wrong to communicate after breakfast will believe anything; and although this is an exaggeration, it is true that the acceptance of one materialistic idea does weaken our whole power of moral resistance to the false and foolish notions which cluster so readily about the minds of the unwary. And it is materialism, ecclesiastical as well as secular, which is always the peril lurking about religion.

I would venture to suggest that fasting-communion

[1] *E.g.* from the *Report* of the English Church Union, 1893:— (i) Those who insist most on the fast before Communion do not mean that there is in any sense any inherent, natural, spiritual, or even possible or contingent irreverence in the Holy Sacrament coming into contact with ordinary food previously taken. Such an idea would be repudiated by all instructed Christians as savouring of Manichæism. (ii) Neither is it meant that, considered *per se* and apart from any question of Church authority or ecclesiastical law, canon, or custom, there could possibly be any sin in communicating after taking ordinary food. (iii) Neither is it meant that there is any Divine command in the matter.

[2] In a recent tract mortal sin is described as '*e.g.*, going to Communion after breaking the fast; stealing a large sum or a small sum from a person extremely poor.' Society of S. Peter and S. Paul, *Joy in Heaven*, p. 21. No doubt the good writers of fifty years ago would be horrified at the result of their writings to-day.

as a *tabu* has had a profoundly demoralising effect upon the corporate life of the Church, and that to the individual the danger lies in the unconscious response within us of that Pharisaism in the struggle against which our Lord laid down his life.

CHAPTER II

THE TEACHING AND EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

BY our Lord's time the Jews had come to attach great importance to fasting, and tradition had added many occasions to the fast on the Day of Atonement which was prescribed by the law. There is, of course, nothing to suggest fasting-communion, however remotely, in the New Testament ; but penitential fasting is alluded to by Jesus more than once.

Speaking to Jews, who as Jews were in the habit of fasting, he tells them (in one of the discourses incorporated in the Sermon on the Mount [1]) when they fasted not to do so with dirty faces.

There is no mention of Jesus fasting in the wilderness in the Marcan account of the Temptation, which simply says 'he was in the wilderness forty days.' [2] Probably Jesus was 'fasting,' in the sense that he had very little to eat ; [3] but there is no suggestion of any ceremonial fast, and New Testament scholars do not think that the word is part of the original tradition.

'This kind can come out by nothing, save by prayer,' is the reading in the Revised Version of the text to which in the Authorised Version is added 'and fasting.' [4] The

[1] Matt. 6 [16-18], probably from 'Q.' [2] Mark 1 [13].

[3] See p. 33.

[4] Mark 9 [29]. The addition of fasting was also made in the derived passage Matthew 17 [21], whence it has also been removed in the Revised Version. Fasting was similarly interpolated in Acts 10 [30] and 1 Cor. 7 [5].

reason for the omission of fasting, of course, is that the MS. evidence shows it to have been a later addition to this saying of Jesus. The scribe who first added the word no doubt did so innocently; but he is the first example of that corruption of the evidence upon which so much later Christian practice came to be built.

Modern scholarship has brought into striking prominence the fact that the struggle against ceremonial rules was a central part of the life of Jesus, as it had been with the prophets.[1] It has been known, at least since the revival of learning in the fifteenth century, that Pharisaism substituted outward observances for inward virtue, that our Lord attacked Pharisaism as the heart of all error, and that Pharisaism brought him to the cross. But recent discoveries of the historical importance of S. Mark's Gospel have made the story much more incisive. Briefly, the ministry of Jesus in Galilee was at first popular not only with the people but with the synagogue. The breach with the synagogue occurred through the action of the Pharisees and priests whose turning against Jesus is quite clearly described by S. Mark in his second chapter, and is ascribed to three courses which Jesus deliberately took: (1) he ate and drank with publicans and sinners (Mark 2 [15]), who by strict Jews were held to be outcast; (2) he did not fast (v. 13); (3) he did not observe the Sabbath in the correct ceremonial way (v. 23); this the Pharisees also criticised, and the third chapter shows the Sabbath question passing into a further stage. Our interest in this volume

[1] *E.g.* Isaiah 58, 'Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke,' etc.; or Micah 6, 'What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy,' etc.

is not with the refusal of the third ceremonialism, but with that of the second. Many Protestants have indeed been with the Pharisees in the third ceremonialism, as many Catholics have followed them in the second. But it is with the second that we are here concerned.

Jesus and his disciples astonished the disciples of John and of the Pharisees by not fasting (Mark 2^{18}); and twice S. Mark states that it was the Pharisees as well as John's disciples who were concerned in this. They came and asked him, 'Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?' His answer is that of a poet: he makes of fasting a token of sorrow, and says that his disciples cannot sorrow now, but that they will have sad enough occasion 'on that day' when he is taken from them: this does not mean that after the Ascension his disciples will relapse into the customs of the Pharisees.[1] Jesus at once goes on to compare the position to the patching of an old garment with undressed cloth, and to the putting of new wine into old wine-skins. The meaning of this is clear: Jesus is tolerant to the old religion and its observances, but points out that the old and the new will not mix, and must be kept apart. The religion of Christ, as we should say in later language, cannot be Judaised; for the two principles are incompatible. This was his comment when the question of fasting was brought before him.

That he followed out the principle in his ordinary habits of life, and in contrast with John Baptist refused to live as an ascetic, is shown by the charges brought

[1] Mark 2^{18}. 'On that day' (v. 20) is omitted in Matthew's transcription of this passage (Matt. 9^{15})—another instance of a slight alteration of Christ's words, which led succeeding ages to think that he had encouraged fasting.

against him and his humorous refutation of them in Luke 7 [34] (= Matt. 11 [19]. The passage is from 'Q'). He is tolerant also: 'Wisdom is justified of all her children,' which is another way of saying 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' If a man is as noble as John, the divine wisdom is justified of him, and his asceticism does not matter, and neither does it matter that the Son of Man eats and drinks like other men.

There is one other passage in which the Master states with perfect clearness his judgment that food regulations have nothing to do with true religion:—

> Hear me all of you, and understand: there is nothing from without the man, that going into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man.[1]

Questions of food are material things, and it is spiritual things with which religion has to deal. We hardly realise to-day how bold and revolutionary was this statement, which strikes at the heart of the whole Levitical system, even of the Law of Moses itself. His disciples themselves did not understand the full purport of the saying, as the marginal comment, '*This he said*, making all meats clean,' shows. Jesus had led his hearers away from all ceremonial observances to moral categories—'Not from without inwards, but from within outwards,' says Edersheim; 'such was the principle of the new Kingdom.' Is it too much to say that this principle is completely reversed by those who talk about sin in connection with non-fasting communion? [2]

[1] Mark 7 [14-15]; cf. Matt. 15 [19] and Luke 11 [39].

[2] Much ingenuity has been displayed in justifying the relapse. One argument has been printed recently which escaped even the subtlety of mediæval scholastics. It is that as the Eucharist is a commemoration of the death of Christ, and as 'there is no ground for

Christ seems indeed to have done all that was needed to guard the Church against all fasting regulations, and at the Last Supper to have guarded it against fasting-communion in particular. Whether that solemn meal was the occasion of a formal institution of the Holy Communion or not is a subject which learned men are now discussing; but it is certain that if it was such a deliberate institution of a sacred meal, it was a meal taken in the evening and a communion after food that was instituted; and as such the Eucharist was celebrated throughout the first century. The Agapè or Love-feast was eaten in solemn imitation of the Last Supper: it was in fact a 'Lord's Supper,'[1] and its culminating act was the eating and drinking of the bread and wine over which thanksgiving had been said.[2]

Not only, then, is the teaching of our Lord opposed to the very idea of fasting-communion, but his example is against it also.

supposing that our Lord partook of any food, or even drink, after leaving the supper-table the night before, till on the Cross he said, "I thirst,"' therefore we ought to communicate fasting!

[1] 1 Cor. 11. See p. 20.

[2] 'Over which thanksgiving has been said' is still the phrase used by Justin Martyr, *c.* A.D. 150.

CHAPTER III

THE APOSTOLIC AND SUB-APOSTOLIC AGE

The Agapè-Eucharist

THE Acts and Epistles do not tell us much about the Holy Communion; but they provide us with certain facts which are clear and are not disputed now that the discovery of early Christian documents during the last half-century has increased the security of scholarship. They also show that S. Paul followed his Master in treating such matters as fasting with complete indifference: 'Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink.'[1]

The 'Lord's Supper' of 1 Cor. 11 was an evening meal which included the 'breaking of bread' (a phrase which seems already to have a technical meaning):[2] the Lord's Supper consisted of the Agapè or Love-feast (the word only occurs, not certainly, in the late Epistle bearing the name of Jude [3]), followed by the breaking of bread: that the breaking of bread followed the Agapè, and did not precede it, is now generally agreed by scholars, and is

[1] Col. 2^{16-23}; cf. Rom. 14^{14-22} and 1 Cor. 8^{8}. The importance of this case was weakened for our ancestors because they did not know that the passages in favour of fasting were interpolations—Mark 9^{29}, Matt. 17^{21}, Acts 10^{30}, and 1 Cor. 7^{5} in the Authorised Version.

[2] Acts 2^{42}, 20^{7}. In Acts 2^{46} and 27^{35} the breaking of bread may refer to an ordinary meal.

[3] Jude 12. In the derived 2 Pet. 2^{13} the verse is cited with the reading ἀπάταις (deceits) for ἀγάπαις (love-feasts), and the oldest MSS. hesitate between these.

stated definitely by the leading Roman Catholic authority, Duchesne.[1]

From the account of the gathering at Troas we learn that the Christian disciples met on the first day of the week in order to break bread.[2] The meeting was in the evening, for S. Paul's address, which was very long, lasted till midnight: he went on still longer, and Eutychus dropped asleep and fell out of the window. When he was restored, S. Paul returned to the upper chamber, and broke the bread, after which they talked on for the rest of the night. It is clear that the breaking of bread was only postponed till after midnight because of the unexpected length of Paul's speech. That discourse might have begun at about 10 or 9.30 p.m., and it is a not improbable conjecture that the Agapè may have begun at eight or nine o'clock.

The passage in the first Epistle to the Corinthians[3] gives us some more information. As in the Acts, the gathering is in the evening, for it is called an evening meal, *τὸ κυριακὸν δεῖπνον*—the dominical supper: the Agapè and the Communion are spoken of as one act, and the words of the Lord are quoted to show that there is a proclamation of the Lord's death, and that the excesses in eating and drinking with which S. Paul is concerned lead men to 'eat the bread or drink the cup unworthily,' and thus to be 'guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.'[4] The solemnity of these words shows that the meal was a Communion as well as an Agapè, and the fact that the excesses led men to receive unworthily shows that the Agapè preceded the Eucharist.

In Ignatius, A.D. 110, the 'Eucharist' (*i.e.* 'thanks-

[1] L. Duchesne, *Origines du Culte Chrétien*, p. 49, Paris, 1909.
[2] Acts 20^{7-11}. [3] 1 Cor. 11^{17-34}. [4] *Ibid.*, 11^{27}.

giving'), called by this name, seems still to be associated with the Agapè,[1] and the term 'breaking of bread' to be used to include both.

The *Didachè* was only discovered in 1883: it represents some rather remote community of the first half of the second century, perhaps *c.* 120. In the *Didachè* the Agapè and 'Eucharist' (this word is used) are joined, in fact they seem to be identical: the participants eat till they 'are filled,' and then the prophets offer thanksgivings. Some words of blessing are given for the cup and the bread. There seems to be no doubt, as Bishop Maclean says,[2] that the meal came before the Eucharist.

Of the utmost importance is the deeply moving picture of a celebration of the Communion at the beginning of the second century in the Cappella Greca of the Catacomb of Priscilla at Rome. It was discovered and disengaged from the stalactites which hid it by Monsignor Wilpert at the end of the nineteenth century, and is reproduced in colour by him in his great work on the Catacombs under the name of *Fractio Panis*.[3] The Eucharist is represented as a meal, just as it would have been celebrated in the little mortuary chapel. Seven persons are seated round the table, one of them being a woman and one the president, who is conspicuously

[1] *Smyrn.*, VIII. 4, 6; *Eph.* 20; Lightfoot (*Apost. Fathers, S. Ignatius*, 1883, p. 313) seems to be right in this.

[2] A. J. Maclean, Bishop of Moray and Ross, *Recent Discoveries illustrating Early Christian Life and Worship*, p. 9, London, S.P.C.K., 1904.

[3] G. Wilpert, *Le Pitture delle Catacombe romane*, Rome, 1903, I. p. 264, II. tav. 15. On the same page is reproduced an inferior fresco of the same subject from the Catacomb of Callixtus, but its interest is that it belongs to the *end* of the second century, and the partakers are still seated round a table as in the earlier picture. There is a small reproduction of *Fractio Panis* in my *Everyman's History of the Prayer Book*, p. 180.

breaking a small loaf or roll of bread. On the table is a plain mug with two handles, and two plates, one with two fishes on it, the other with five rolls of bread : the fishes and the five rolls are partly symbolical, as are the seven baskets full of bread on either side of the picture ; but it is the symbolism appropriate to a common meal with sacred significance, such as is here depicted.

The sub-apostolic period is obscure, but there is clear evidence of the Agapè-Eucharist lasting on till at least well into the second century. In Justin Martyr. *c.* 150, however, the Eucharist is described with no mention of the Agapè, though we cannot build any theory on this, since he is writing for a pagan emperor (Antoninus Pius), and simplifies his description, not mentioning, for instance, the important act of the breaking of the bread.[1] There is no hint as to the time of the service ; but there can, as Dr. Gwatkin noticed,[2] be no question of fasting, since the worshippers were drawn from a wide area, and some came in from the country.

The Agapè only concerns our subject while it still precedes the Eucharist. When were they separated ? In the present paucity of second-century documents we must suspend judgment, and be content with saying that the Agapè was not separated from the Eucharist for nearly a century (*i.e. c.* 130) at least, as Duchesne thinks,[3] and that the separation may not have taken place till the end of the second century, as Dr. F. C. Conybeare asserts with certainty.[4] Indeed, the latter considers it doubtful whether Tertullian's detailed account of the Agapè in his

[1] *Apol.*, I. 65–7.

[2] H. M. Gwatkin, *Early Church History*, I. p. 256, London, Macmillan, 1909.

[3] L. Duchesne, *Origines du Culte Chrétien*, p. 49, Paris, 1909.

[4] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1910, I. p. 364. *Cf.* Dr. A. J. Maclean, Hastings' *Dictionary of Religion and Ethics*, art. 'Agapè.'

Apology ' is to be regarded as exclusive of an accompanying Eucharist.' In that account the banquet (*triclinium*) or supper (*coena*) is described : they recline in the usual way and feast, and hold sober conversation ; then they wash their hands and light lamps, and each is invited to sing a hymn to God ; and ' prayer ends, as it began, the banquet.'[1] He does not mention any Communion, but then he is arguing with pagans, who, as we know from Celsus, drew horrible conclusions from the language which Christians used about the Lord's body and blood. Such reticence accounts for some of our ignorance : Diocletian's destruction of Christian documents accounts for more ; Muslim devastations, such as the destruction of the library at Alexandria, for more ; but we know also that many documents were destroyed in later ages by students who regarded their contents as unorthodox or peculiar.[2]

Doubtless the Agapè-Eucharist disappeared at different times in different places, and latest in those that were more remote.[3] But in the Mediterranean world of the fourth century the Agapè was a separate service, and was already in some places no longer celebrated in church. In the African Church in Augustine's time [4] it survived

[1] Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, cap. 39.

[2] One curious tract is thought by Conybeare (*ibid.*) to describe an Agapè-Eucharist celebrated by virgins in the fourth century. But in spite of its resemblance to the passage in the *Didachè*, it may well be no more than a description of an Agapè. There is still much doubt, partly due to the ambiguity of words like 'eucharist,' which often means just 'thanksgiving.' Professor Charles Bigg in his *Christian Platonists* stated that the writings of Clement of Alexandria probably showed the identity of the Agapè and Eucharist in Egypt, *c.* A.D. 200 ; but Clement is very obscure.

[3] Conybeare points out the eighth-century evidence of the existence still, not long before, of the Agapè-Eucharist in the Armenian Church. He gives a full list of authorities.

[4] Augustine, *Contra Faust.*, xx. 20.

as a charity-supper for the poor. But the Agapè in church was not finally abolished till 692.[1]

The sub-apostolic evidence, then, is small; but there is enough to show that S. Augustine was entirely mistaken when he stated that S. Paul's remark, 'the rest will I set in order whensoever I come,' must have meant that he was about to separate the Eucharist from the Agapè, so that the Communion should no longer 'always be received after other food.'[2] Upon this mistake of Augustine much of the error about fasting-communion has been built. It was always admitted by all that to receive before food was not to follow the example of our Lord, but it was pleaded and honestly believed that there was apostolic sanction for the change, because S. Paul was supposed to have made it.

This is how it came about that many good men even as late as the nineteenth century thought it their duty to press fasting-communion. It was against the whole tenour of Christ's teaching, and was not a following of his example; but it was thought that the apostolic Church had so ordered it, and that the Holy Spirit in the Church must be followed. The mistake about Pliny seemed to supply a particle of evidence to bridge over the long gap between S. Paul and the Dark Ages; and (if one may change the metaphor) it is curious to notice how till quite recent years writer after writer tumbled into the hole unconsciously made by that pagan pro-praetor.[3] Forgery also had been brought to the aid of

[1] By the Quinisext Council (Trullo) at Constantinople, in its 74th canon.

[2] For Augustine's comment on 1 Cor. 11[34], see Appendix, p 123.

[3] *E.g.* in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, 1898, I. pp. 428, 490, III. p. 157; Procter and Frere's *New History of the Book of Common Prayer*, 1901, p. 433; *Prayer Book Dictionary* (with a preface by Bishop Chavasse), 1912, p. 335.

the hypothesis, and in the eighteenth century was still doing useful work for the unhistorical position which the Roman Church had adopted. But no scholar to-day would deny that the Agapè culminating in a Communion[1] (or a solemn thanksgiving said after the meal), which was the dominical supper described in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, continued unaltered through the sub-apostolic age.

Penitential Fasting

It may be useful here to say a word about fasting in general—penitential fasting, as we shall call it.

The corruption of New Testament texts shows how easily men who were under the influence of Jewish habits read the idea into the original records, and thus made it appear to later ages that fasting was observed by Christ and taught by the Apostles. The word was added to Mark 9 [29] ('This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting,' A.V.), and the whole verse, thus altered in later manuscripts, was added to Matt. 17 [21]. It was also added in later manuscripts to Acts 10 [30] ('Four days ago I was fasting until this hour'), and to 1 Cor. 7 [5] ('that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer'). Thus it became more possible to misunderstand the teaching and example of Christ as time went on.

There is no textual evidence against the mention of fasting at Antioch in Acts 13 [2-3], when Barnabas and Saul were 'separated,' or when they ordained elders and

[1] This is the more ecclesiastical way of describing it. Many historians, in this country and abroad, would call it, as Gwatkin does (*op. cit.*, I. p. 255), simply 'the solemn grace which closed an evening meal.'

'prayed with fasting' in Acts 14 [23]. But we cannot be very certain, seeing how the word got added in the other places where it occurs; it may have slipped into these two places also, before the fourth and fifth centuries to which our earliest manuscripts belong. If these two cases are original, we have clear evidence that fasting was sometimes practised, as indeed we should expect in the case of men who had been brought up as Jews and had not had personal intercourse with Jesus. We do know, however, for certain that S. Paul strongly insisted on complete freedom in such matters—'Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink.' [1]

This liberty was continued in the early Church: Justin Martyr (A.D. 150) mentions that catechumens and their friends fasted before Baptism.[2] Fasting existed, but it was voluntary and it is not prominent: this is shown also by Tertullian's dissatisfaction with the practice of the Church up to the time (*c.* A.D. 210) when he wrote his treatise on fasting; [3] he was then already under the influence of Montanism; and Montanus, though in schism, exercised much influence on the Church in establishing customs of fasting. The first recorded instance, however, of ecclesiastical legislation on the subject is not till A.D. 306, when the Council of Illiberis ordered fasting on Saturdays. We know from the works of men like Basil and Chrysostom how important and rigorous fasting had become before the end of the fourth century. Yet customs still varied greatly. Socrates tells us (*c.* A.D. 439) that the length of Lent varied in different places, and that some abstained from fruit and eggs, some ate only bread, and some (not all) fasted till 3 p.m.,

[1] Col. 2 [16] (*cf.* 1 Cor. 8 [8]; Rom. 14 [14-22]; and also the passage in 1 Tim. 4 [3-5]). [2] *Apol.*, I. 61. [3] *De jejunio.*

'and since no one can show any written rule about this, it is plain that the Apostles left the matter free to every one's liberty and choice, so that no one should be compelled to do a good thing by necessity and fear.'[1] With Pope Leo I., however (A.D. 440-61), the system became more rigid and rigorous, and gradually developed into the mediæval system of strictness tempered by dispensations.

Fasting as a general practice is not much in evidence at the present day, and is often little more than a pretence.[2] Its virtual disappearance as a serious part of the normal religious life is now being hastened by modern psychology, because we are learning that fasting plays a trick with the unconscious self, and induces a loss of balance, easily developing into hysteria, which was once mistaken for spiritual exaltation. This is illustrated by the curiously small contribution to spiritual and intellectual history which was made under the influence of fasting customs, considering the length of time between the third and the sixteenth century. With all their advantages as undoubting Christians, the patristic and scholastic writers produced but little enduring literature compared with that of classical antiquity or of the Renaissance.

Once again the personality of Christ vindicates itself: other things change and pass away, but his example

[1] *Historia Ecclesiastica*, v. 22.

[2] The Eastern Orthodox fast, when observed, is of the fourth-century type, involving only one meal a day, and a diet which excludes meat, fish (but not shell-fish, or, on Mount Athos, snails), and even in strictness milk, butter, cheese, eggs, and oil. 'But all the fasts,' says a Roman Catholic writer, 'except Lent are relaxed, and even in Lent the average Orthodox layman no more fasts than the average Catholic.' A. Fortescue, *The Orthodox Eastern Church*, p. 426, London, 1907. But he rather underestimates Orthodox fasting.

remains, sane and wholesome, with the freshness of spring amid crumbling systems and fading ideals.

The danger, indeed, at the present day is that we are forgetting his message of self-sacrifice ; and we need a recovery of the principle of self-denial, not by a system of formal rules, but freely for the sake of others as well as for our own.

CHAPTER IV

INTRODUCTORY TO THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

The Little Books

WITH the disappearance of the supposed evidence from Pliny the whole case for the apostolic origin of fasting-communion falls to the ground. It would indeed have been strange if the apostles had introduced a rule which was the exact opposite both of the example and of the principles of their Master. For Christ, let us repeat it, had broken the bread and blessed the cup after food; and Christ had taught that customs of eating or fasting were matters of complete indifference to true religion.

But it was widely believed that the Apostles had made this change, and stated by men who claim our highest respect, Dr. Liddon[1] and Dr. Bright,[2] for instance, in the nineteenth century. As late as 1903, another admirable man, the Rev. F. W. Puller,[3] wrote of it as 'an apostolic rule,' and even (the italics are his own) as 'a *law*': he based himself with complete confidence upon Pliny (A.D. 112) and Tertullian (*c.* A.D. 200); and then upon the passage two centuries later (A.D. 400) in S. Augustine. Tertullian seemed to be a useful link

[1] 'Nothing less than the authority of Apostles will adequately account for the universality of morning celebrations.'—H. P. Liddon, *Evening Communions*, p. 7, London, 1860-1872.

[2] For Bright's later opinion, however, see p. 114, below.

[3] *Concerning the Fast before Communion*, 1903, pp. 5, 30, 31, 46.

between Pliny and Augustine; but Tertullian also has broken down, as we shall see. For the rest, Puller referred his readers to a little book called *Fasting Reception*,[1] which gives thirteen supposed early instances of the practice. He cannot have verified the evidence given in *Fasting Reception*; but his notice of it is important, because it illustrates the great influence which one small book has had in building up the idea of fasting-communion among Anglicans. Mr. Hall's work showed little sign that he understood the documents he was dealing with, or was in any sense a historian. One is driven to conjecture that he had derived his material, directly or indirectly, from Roman Catholic text-books, and had taken it as he found it.

One difficulty in dealing with the matter is that Englishmen are naturally impatient of arguments based upon the customs of semi-barbarous ages. To most of us the fact that in the fourth century people did not bathe once during the whole of Lent is sufficient to prevent our wishing to follow their example.[2] Yet on apparently trivial and irrelevant arguments of 'patristic authority' has been built a custom which is upheld by many sensible people, and has become so widespread that eight o'clock in the morning is now very generally regarded as the normal hour for the Holy Communion.

If it be folly, we must answer a fool according to his folly. But the idea at the bottom of it is not folly. It is this: That the departure from Christ's example

[1] Frederick Hall, *Fasting Reception of the Blessed Sacrament: A Custom of the Church Catholic*, 2nd edition, London, 1882.

[2] Augustine thought that the catechumens bathed and broke their fast on Maundy Thursday because otherwise the smell would have been so bad that the bishops would not have been able to baptize them! (*Letter to Januarius.*) See Appendix, p. 125.

is admittedly serious; but that S. Paul initiated the departure, and that the whole Church throughout the ages has followed the example of S. Paul.

That idea is mistaken. First, because, as we have seen, it is not true that S. Paul had anything to do with fasting-communion, or the Early Church either. Secondly, because, if we had to choose between Christ and S. Paul or between Christ and the Church, we should nowadays choose Christ. But it is necessary to show point by point why all these supposed evidences are wrong, and I shall therefore go through the instances in Mr. Hall's little book, because it contains the most, and because it has been the main recent source of all the ideas and prejudices.

The prejudices are very strong. They appeal to the Pharisee in each one of us, and become *tabus* and obsessions. The idea of fasting-communion is based, as we have said, upon materialism; and its spiritual danger is that if we really come to think that it matters whether we eat or not before communion, we may easily lose our sense of spiritual reality and of proportion, till we are ready to believe almost anything. It is indeed being seriously taught in the Church of England, as we have said,[1] that to communicate after breakfast is a mortal sin, like stealing a large sum of money, and that mortal sin, if not absolved after private confession, brings eternal torment in Hell.

It is useless to compromise. The whole system has been taken over from the Roman Church, and logic will have its way. Either it is right to forbid communion after food, or it is wrong.

[1] See page 12.

Two Points

Two notes will make clearer the chapters which follow.

1. The 'evidences,' so written in inverted commas, as from the little book on *Fasting Reception* by the Rev. F. Hall referred to above.[1] It is used as a basis because it is the fullest and most representative of books of this type,[2] containing the complete list of 'Ancient Testimony' once used, and not merely a selection as in the pamphlets of Liddon and of Puller.[3] Such lists of 'evidences' were constantly promulgated in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and are the background of the mentality of those who advocate fasting communion at the present day.[4]

2. The term 'fasting-communion' is always used, because the paraphrase 'The fast before communion' is misleading. To fast on Good Fridays and Easter Even,

[1] See p. 30.

[2] His *Ancient Testimony* consists of the extracts dealt with below from Pliny, Tertullian, Cyprian, Basil, Ambrose, Gregory Nazianzen, Timothy of Alexandria, Chrysostom, Augustine, Sozomen, Socrates, Anastasius, Isidore. He also gives the local councils referred to below. But this does not exhaust his arguments, for Holy Scripture is also brought in; he points out that the Israelites gathered the manna 'every morning,' and 'when the sun waxed hot it melted'; and he piously compares the fasting-communicant to the ass 'whereon yet man never sat.' *Op. cit.*, p. 51.

[3] F. W. Puller, *Concerning the Fast before Communion*, London, 1903, treats it as the source for evidences.

[4] See *e.g.* J. H. Blunt's *Dictionary of Theology* (1872, p. 272). Much of this is accepted, though with commonsense modifications, in Cassell's *Dictionary of Religion*, 1891, by Dr. W. Benham. It is curious to note how the 'evidences' were accepted by those who advocated a more liberal view, like W. Allen Whitworth (*The Real Presence*, 1893), E. F. Wayne and S. J. Stone (*The Church's Mind on Fasting Communion*, 1899), who did not suspect their worthlessness.

They are constantly being retailed to-day. As this book goes to press there comes to hand the parish magazine of an important church in which is printed a list of the 'evidences,' evidently derived, directly or indirectly, from *Fasting Reception*.

for instance, is a fast before the communion of Easter, but it is not fasting-reception of the Sacrament. Scottish Presbyterians and other Protestants observe, or used to observe, very solemn fasts on a day before communicating,[1] but they have never thought it necessary to communicate fasting.

Different Meanings of 'Fasting'

Indeed, the different meanings of the word 'fast' have caused much confusion. This confusion is made worse by the technical terms 'ecclesiastical fast' (such as a Lenten fast) and 'natural fast' (the very unnatural fast before communion). There are really three meanings to-day, and there were once four, which the word 'fast' can bear :—

A. *Privation*, as when Christ 'fasted' in the wilderness ;[2] or when S. Paul said to the soldiers on board the ship, 'This day is the fourteenth day that ye wait and continue fasting, having taken nothing,' by which he did not mean the physical impossibility of no food having passed their lips.[3] It is worth noticing that 'nothing' sometimes may mean 'no set meal.'[4] The ancients ate a light breakfast, but the advent of the barbarians must

[1] 'In the Scottish Presbyterian churches days of "fasting, humiliation, and prayer" are observed by ecclesiastical appointment in each parish once or twice a year on some day of the week preceding the Sunday fixed for the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.' *Ency. Brit.*, 1910, x. p. 197*b*.

[2] See p. 15.

[3] Acts 27 [33]. 'Fasting' is similarly used for privation in 2 Cor. 11 [27], 'in fastings often.'

[4] So Cornelius a Lapide in his commentary on this passage: 'When he says "taken nothing" he means very little and as good as nothing, or nothing in comparison with a regular and proper *prandium* or *coena*.' *Commentaria*, ed. 1717, p. 353.

have altered this custom, since in the Middle Ages and till the seventeenth century people seem generally to have dined between 11 a.m and noon. A man might have said that he ate 'nothing' till this meal; but he would not have meant that he did not drink a pint or two of ale on rising, and comfort himself with apples and bread.

B. *Penitential Fasting.* This, though it was dropped by Jesus Christ, was, as we have said,[1] reintroduced by the early Church, at first as a voluntary matter. This kind of fasting occupies a large place in the writings of the fourth-century Fathers. It was observed mostly in Lent, on Wednesdays and Fridays, Saturdays and vigils, and meant in general going without the midday dinner (the *prandium*), and not having a set meal till supper (*coena*). It did not carry with it the idea of no food or drink whatever passing the lips, but meant not having a heavy meal during most of the day. 'Ecclesiastical' fasting of this kind has nothing to do with fasting-communion; and the two things must be kept distinct, if we are to understand patristic passages in which the word 'fast' occurs.

The historic and proper meaning of the word 'fast,' *jejunium*, is abstemiousness: *Jejunium*, says S. Isidore of Seville, who died in 636, *est parsimonia victus abstinentiaque ciborum*;[2] and the idea of the word bearing another meaning, that of no food having passed the lips since the previous midnight, only grew up in the Middle Ages.

C. *Not drunk.* There really was another meaning to the word *jejunus* in old times: the reader will find examples of this scattered over our little book.[3] But the

[1] See p. 26. [2] *Originum* (*Etymologiarium*, Migne), VI. 19, § 65.
[3] *E.g.* S. Basil on p. 58.

following instances may be added here, and compared with a sentence of S. Chrysostom quoted below.[1] People were not allowed to give evidence in court, as we know, after the *prandium*, because they were then unfit for the transaction of serious business. Here again 'fasting' means 'before dinner' or *non pransus*, i.e. *sobrius*; and bishops are required to be in the same condition before they confirm. (There are good reasons for quoting in the original Latin.)

A.D. 805

Et omnino nullus nisi jejunus ad juramentum vel ad testimonium admittatur.[2]

And, among other [3] instances :—

A.D. 858

Testes jejuni jurent.[4]

Ut populus praedicetur ut oblationes Deo offerant . . . abstinentes se a luxuria propriisque uxoribus et reliquis illicitis; nisi forte criminalibus culpis sint impliciti.[5]

Ut episcopi non nisi jejuni per impositionem manuum Spiritum sanctum tradant, exceptis infirmis et morte periclitantibus.[6]

D. *Fasting-communion* means that nothing, solid or liquid, passes the lips before communion. Since S. Thomas Aquinas the rule in the Roman Church has been that this fast begins at midnight the day before: in practice this means that the night has elapsed, and that breakfast is taken after communion; it means in fact *no breakfast*, as distinguished from the penitential fasting

[1] See p. 67.
[2] *Capitularia Regum Francorum*, ed. S. Beluzius, Parisiis, 1677, tom. I., No. xi., col. 426.
[3] *Op. cit.*, col. 432, 437, etc.
[4] *Op. cit.*, col. 1286.
[5] *Op. cit.*, col. 1289.
[6] *Op. cit.*, col. 1137.

of the patristic age, which meant *no dinner*: but a man who ate a heavy supper immediately before midnight and communicated immediately after midnight would be keeping the rule. In the Roman Church this law has led to a curious number of exceptions, since it has not proved to be altogether practicable even in ages of very infrequent communion.[1] The custom spread into the Eastern Church, where, however, it is characteristically vaguer: a man may dispense himself if he thinks it necessary;[2] and communion is rare—with the pious at Christmas, Easter, Whitsunday, and the Falling-asleep: in practice, what a visitor in the East sees is only the communion of infants who are brought up in their mothers' arms and are not fasting.

[1] See p. 103.

[2] J. Wickham Legg, *Papal Faculties allowing Food before Communion*, S.P.C.K., 1905, p. 5.

CHAPTER V

THE FORGERIES

THERE was considerable reason a century ago for Roman Catholics to think that a fast before communion was essential, because, besides the high authority in that Church of the thirteenth-century Thomas Aquinas (upon whom the present custom is based), it was once believed that certain ancient documents gave it a much earlier and more crucial authority. It was not known that these documents were forgeries. This is now admitted, and the first three are no longer quoted: we are therefore apt to forget how strong the case seemed to be in old times, when fasting-communion was thought to date from apostolic times in the first century, and to have been enforced by the council that produced the substance of the Nicene Creed.

'S. Clement'

A.D. 96

Gavantus, in his commentary on the rubrics of the Missal[1] in the eighteenth century, says that fasting-communion 'emanates from the Apostles. Clement, in his second Epistle, says that he received it from St. Peter.' Strong evidence indeed! But the epistle is spurious and the statement a forgery; and besides, it is about a fast after and not before communion.

[1] *Comment. in Rubricas Missalis*, III. 9. *Thes. Sac. Rituum*, Venice, 1769. It was such passages that misled Jeremy Taylor.

'Bishop Soter'

A.D. 170

This statement is from the False Decretals, the famous forgery of the eighth century. It is to the effect that no priest should celebrate after food and drink, and does not deal with the laity. It used to be quoted as a genuine order of Soter.[1]

'The Council of Nicaea'

A.D. 325

(The first of the Four General Councils which were said, *e.g.* by S. Gregory, to be like the Four Gospels in authority.) This Council passed twenty genuine canons, and there is no suggestion of fasting-communion among them. But as time went on many spurious canons were added by the pseudo-Isidore, Gratian, and others. These also contained nothing on the subject. But an obscure African canon stated that the Nicene Council had 'prohibited the sacrifices after dinner'; and this was believed by some seventeenth-century writers.[2]

The So-called Canons of Hippolytus

The conclusions of Dom R. H. Connolly as to this document have won general acceptance among scholars. Briefly, the *Egyptian Church Order* is Hippolytean; but the so-called *Canons of Hippolytus* are more than an interpolated version: they are the outcome of 'a deliberate process of redaction perpetrated on some really

[1] *E.g.* by Carranza, *Summa omnium Conciliorum*, Paris, 1688.

[2] *E.g.* by Giustiniano, *Explan. Pauli Epist.*, Lyons, 1612, tom. I., p. 561, col. 2: 'that this custom of receiving the Eucharist before all food was confirmed in the Nicene Council.' Also by others, including Gavantus in the commentary quoted above, III. 9.

early document.' A sentence has been used as an argument for fasting-communion, and was quoted recently by the *Guardian* in a leading article[1] as showing evidence of fasting-communion in the third century. It is about beginning the day by partaking of the mysteries, and is quoted below, because it belongs to the fifth or sixth century.[2]

'Bishop Timothy of Alexandria'

A.D. 385

There is a curious passage which is quoted in *Fasting Reception*, and carefully explained in Bright's notes to Liddon's tract already referred to,[3] but which is so out of key with fourth-century literature that one is not surprised to find Dr. Brightman putting it in the fatal square brackets which mean 'authenticity very doubtful at best.'[4] As Bishop A. J. Maclean tells me, his experience of Syrian canons leads him to the conclusion that such things were 'nearly always antedated, usually by several centuries.' Neither the date nor the authorship of the 'Canonical Answer of Timothy of Alexandria' is authentic, as indeed the silliness of the question and the obscurity of the answer might lead the ordinary cautious reader to suppose.

The question, however, is not really about fasting-communion, but about a penitential fast which the questioner is supposed to have kept as a preparation for his communion. Probably he is supposed to have been fasting strictly all day in Lent with a view to communi-

[1] July 3, 1925.

[2] See p. 81. See *Texts and Studies*, where Dom Connolly's conclusions are given in 'The So-called Egyptian Church Order' (ed. J. A. Robinson), Cambridge, 1916, vol. VIII., 4, pp. 59-61, 132-4.

[3] See p. 29.

[4] F. E. Brightman in *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. I., 1900,

cating at the Eucharist, which was usually in the afternoon or evening on fast-days. The answer to this piece of Pharisaism seems to have been a sensible one, whoever gave it, though Dr. Bright's translation [1] makes it almost unintelligible.

> *Question.*—If a man, fasting with a view to communion, unwillingly swallow water when washing out his mouth or in the bath, may he communicate afterwards?
>
> *Answer.*—[Yes.] Since if Satan have found this an occasion of hindering from communion he will do this the oftener.[2]

'S. Chrysostom'

c. A.D. 400

The next is of considerably more importance because it has been quoted in all the books on the subject, even by Dr. Bright[3] and the Rev. F. W. Puller,[4] without any warning about its character.

S. Chrysostom is credited with a letter to Cyriacus, in which the following sentence occurs:

> Many things they dressed up against me, and say that I gave communion to some after they had eaten. And if I did this, may my name be blotted out of the book of bishops, and not written in the book of orthodox faith: but if I did anything of the sort, Christ will cast me out of his Kingdom. But if they persist in urging this, and

[1] In H. P. Liddon, *Evening Communions*, 1876, p. 32: '"Since Satan has found an occasion for hindering him from Communion, he will do this (*i.e.* communicate) the oftener" (*i.e.* he will not communicate *then*).' Dr. Wickham Legg, who gives the text (*Papal Faculties*, p. 12), says that he cannot decide what the meaning is.

[2] The Greek text is printed in A. Gallandius, *Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum*, VII. p. 350, Venice, 1770; and in Σύνταγμα Κανόνων, IV. 341, Athens, 1854.

[3] In H. P. Liddon, *Evening Communions*, 1876.

[4] F. W. Puller, *Concerning the Fast before Communion*, 1903. And of course in *Fasting Reception*.

are contentious, let them also pass sentence against the Lord himself, who gave the Communion to the Apostles after supper.[1]

As long ago as 1753 the Bollandist Stilting wrote of this that he thought it the work of an ignorant man who had not enough judgment to scrape together characteristic material ;[2] and Pope Benedict XIV., in 1756, quotes this judgment with approval.[3] It is hardly necessary to add that modern scholars endorse the verdict. Migne omits the letter altogether.

Among other 'spuriosities' (the dictionary really needs enrichment for dealing with a subject like fasting) are the remarkable evasions of Augustine's meaning when in his letter to Januarius he recommends a repast before communion,[4] and several forced translations,[5] and some curious omissions,[6] as well as additions,[7] not to mention the unintentional corruptions of the text of the New Testament itself.[8]

[1] *Opera*, tom. I. (Epistola 125), p. 668*d*, Parisiis, 1675.

[2] 'Quapropter centonem esse existimo indocti hominis, qui non tanto valebat iudicio, ut congrua personis corradere sciret.' *Acta Sanctorum* of the Bollandists : September, t. IV., Ant. 1753, pp. 611, 613 ; § LXIX. num. 1072, 1081.

[3] 'La lettera di S. Giovanni Grisostomo, poc' anzi nominata, è riconosciuta per genuina dal Lupo, dal Tillemont, dal Montfaucon ; ma con molte sode congetture è rigettata come apocrifa dall' erudito Padre Stilting Continuatore Bollandiano negli Atti di S. Giovanni Grisostomo illustrati, e stampati nell' anno 1753 ed a Noi dedicati, come può vedersi *al* § 69, *num.* 1072 *e seg.*, e particolarmente *al num.* 1081 : Ma, quand' anche la Lettera fosse genuina di S. Giovanni Grisostomo, il Santo non approva, che si dia la Communione anche a chi non è digiuno ; nega di averla mai amministrata a chi aveva mangiato.' Benedict XIV., Faculty granted to 'King James III.' (the Old Pretender) allowing him to take food before communion. Vatican, Archivio Segreto, 1756. Transcribed J. Wickham Legg, *Papal Faculties*, 1905, p. 41.[1]

[4] See pp. 58, 74 n. 1, 119.

[5] See pp. 77 n. 1, 79 n. 2, 89 n. 1.

[6] See pp. 62, 63, 83 n. 3, 85 n. 2, 87 n. 3.

[7] See pp. 60, 73 n. 2, 80. Other forgeries are mentioned on pp. 65, 95.

[8] See p. 14.

CHAPTER VI

THE MISTAKE ABOUT PLINY

A.D. 112

THE earliest and most important of the 'evidences' is from the letter of the younger Pliny to the Emperor Trajan, describing a body of Christians whom he had dealt with in Bithynia, an old Greek settlement on the Black Sea in the north of Asia Minor. This extract from Pliny became famous in the nineteenth century as an evidence of fasting-communion early in the second century. It was so treated in Procter and Frere's History of the Prayer Book,[1] and, as this admirable work is deservedly a text-book in our theological colleges, the clergy were naturally brought up to suppose that the practice was so early as to be in fact apostolic. Indeed, Bishop Samuel Wilberforce in a Charge of 1860[2] took a bold leap of seventy years and argued that Pliny's evidence showed that S. Paul must have meant when he said, 'the rest will I put in order whensoever I come,' that he was about to move the Lord's Supper from the evening to the early morning.

The evidence is not really Pliny's but that of certain ex-Christians who had abjured their religion, which they described to Pliny in the terms they thought would seem most favourable to a pagan official. The statement of these apostates Pliny sent on to the Emperor.

[1] F. Procter and W. H. Frere, *A New History of the Book of Common Prayer*, p. 432, London, Macmillan, 1901.

[2] *Charge*, Nov. 1860, p. 13.

We will divide it into paragraphs for the sake of clearness, and begin at the point where Pliny describes the witnesses :—

An information without a name was put into my hands concerning a list of many persons who deny that they are, or ever were, Christians. . . . Others, also accused by an informer, admitted that they were Christians, or rather that they had been Christians but had entirely renounced the error, some since three years, some since more, some even since about twenty years. All these worshipped your image and the images of the gods, and they even vented imprecations against Christ :

They maintained that all their fault or error was this, that they had been accustomed on a fixed day to meet before dawn and to sing alternately among themselves a hymn to Christ as a god ;

and that they bound themselves by an oath (*sacramentum*), not for any crime, but to abstain from theft, brigandage, and adultery, to keep their word, and not to refuse to restore a deposit when demanded ;

after this was done they used to disperse and assemble again for a common and innocent meal (*promiscuum tamen et innoxium*) ; and even this, they said, they had given up after I had issued an edict by which, in accordance with your instructions, I prohibited the existence of clubs.[1]

In these circumstances I thought it necessary to endeavour to arrive at the truth, even by torture, from two slave-girls who were called deaconesses. But I could discover only an obstinate kind of superstition carried to great excess.

[1] Pliny, *Epist.*, x. 96. I append the Latin text of the important part : 'Adfirmabant autem hanc fuisse summam vel culpae suae vel erroris, quod essent soliti stato die ante lucem convenire, carmenque Christo quasi deo dicere secum invicem : seque sacramento, non in scelus aliquod obstringere, sed ne furta ne latrocinia ne adulteria committerent ne fidem fallerent ne depositum appellati abnegarent : quibus peractis, morem sibi discedendi fuisse, rursusque coeundi ad capiendum cibum promiscuum tamen et innoxium, quod ipsum facere desisse post edictum meum quo secundum mandata tua hetaerias esse vetueram.'

Here we are certainly told that those Christians were up early—indeed, when it was yet dark—and sang a hymn ; but we are not told that they had an early celebration of the Communion. Is the Communion hinted at all by these renegades ? Probably it is ; for the discovery of the *Didachè* (a document unknown when Bishop Samuel Wilberforce wrote) shows that just about this time the Agapè and Communion were still so joined together as to be undistinguishable (if not identical), as they are in the eleventh chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. An ' innocent meal ' would exactly describe it, and the word *innoxium* gives just the slight suggestion we might expect, considering the suspicions which this sacred rite excited among pagans. It may have been a common dinner, the midday *prandium* or the *coena* ; but if it were, why did they trouble to mention it and to stress its harmlessness ? It has been argued that the Communion could not have been meant, because the little church among these converted brigands would never have given up the Communion at Pliny's order ; but, as Dr. Gwatkin pointed out, it was not the church but the renegades who had given it up.[1] The meal was certainly not before dawn, for they dispersed and assembled again before it took place.

But there is a third subject. They bound themselves by an oath not to commit any crime. This was the point that the poor creatures pressed upon Pliny, and the point that interested him as responsible for order in the province. We are not told at what time they took this oath : the renegades may have given Pliny to understand that they did this once a week. Possibly : temp-

[1] ' In *quod ipsum facere desisse* surely the renegades are only speaking of themselves,' says Gwatkin, who regards the meal as an evening one. *Early Church History*, i. p. 129, London, 1909.

tations were strong, and even to-day Asia Minor is not noted for orderly behaviour. But Pliny includes the statement without saying that the oath was taken fasting or before dawn.

Why is this oath important in the argument? Because the Latin for 'oath' is *sacramentum*; and some people jumped to the conclusion that those Bithynians bound themselves by a sacrament to commit no crime, and that Pliny did not understand. They then proceeded to the conclusion that this sacrament was an early Communion administered before dawn.

No scholar with a reputation to lose would now support this. But, since errors die hard, it is worth stating: (1) That the Bithynians probably did not speak Latin, so that *sacramentum* would have been the pagan Pliny's own translation. (2) That a classical Latin dictionary gives the following meanings to *sacramentum*: (*a*) the sum deposited in a lawsuit, and so a lawsuit itself; (*b*) an oath taken by newly enlisted soldiers, and so any oath or engagement. (3) The word *sacramentum* was not in Pliny's time used, even by Latin-speaking Christians, of the Christian mysteries. Tertullian began to give it this meaning in Latin-speaking North Africa some ninety years later, using it for any sacred act, including what we now call the sacraments. So new and unfixed is this application of the word in the *third* century that he speaks of the military oath, the sign of the cross, faith, salvation, the aeons of the Gnostics, and the wood which Abraham prepared for the sacrifice of Isaac, as sacraments.[1]

[1] The use of the word as equivalent to *μυστήριον* in the extant Old Latin Versions of the Bible is later than Tertullian: for the earliest of these O.L. versions are about A.D. 250 in date, possibly a little earlier, but in any case not so early as Tertullian.

We may give the conclusion of present-day scholars in the words of the article on 'Sacrament' in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*:

> In Livy it ['*sacramentum*'] signifies the oath (*q.v.*) which soldiers took among themselves not to run away or desert. Pliny uses it similarly of the oath by which the Christians of Bithynia bound themselves at their solemn meetings not to commit any act of wickedness.

Indeed, the plain man who is not a Latin scholar can easily see how impossible the conjecture is if he reads 'Communion' for *sacramentum*—'They bound themselves by a Communion to abstain from theft.' People bind themselves by oaths or promises, not by sacramental services.

And all the time we have to remember that Pliny says nothing whatever about this *sacramentum*, this oath, being before dawn. The sentence may mean that they had all sworn at some time or other not to commit theft, etc.; but if it does mean that they took an oath every Sunday, the reader will notice that this oath is not connected by Pliny with the hymn before dawn.

And even if the hymn could be interpreted to suggest the Holy Communion, it would not even then imply an early Celebration, but one in the night. Scholars, Roman Catholic [1] as well as others, are now agreed that the Eucharist at this period was in the evening, or at latest at midnight. It lasted many hours, and included the Agapè, the reading of 'memoirs of the Apostles and the writings of the Prophets,' a sermon or many sermons,[2]

[1] Even for the third century the typical Eucharist is described by Dom Fernand Cabrol as beginning towards midnight and lasting till near dawn. *Le Livre de la Prière Antique*, 1919, p. 93.

[2] Justin Martyr, *Apol.*, I. 67.

and perhaps the exercise of those diverse spiritual gifts which S. Paul described.[1] The name 'All-night' is still retained in Greece and Russia for the Saturday evening service. It is, however, impossible that the *carmen* can refer to the Eucharist, though it may refer to a rudimentary vigil; and the *carmen* is the only feature that is mentioned as taking place in the early morning.

Pliny's letter gives too vague an account for any theory to rest upon. It is the report of a pagan official to a pagan emperor of information given by some wretched apostates from a remote and rather savage region. Yet, vague as it is, it does fit in curiously well with what we now know about this early period. We know that the earliest Christian hymns were just those sung before 'dawn' and at twilight, the hymns at cockcrow and lamp-lighting, and in φῶς ἱλαρόν ('O gladsome light, O grace'[2]) we have an example of the hymn at cockcrow which is not considered later than the third century, and may belong to the second. The discovery of the *Didachè* and of the *Fractio Panis* fresco, both of the same period as Pliny's report, give us just such an idea of the Agapè-Eucharist as is suggested by the phrase about the innocent meal.

It is, then, certain that we have nothing here about an 'early Celebration,' but the account may well mean that:

1. They sang a hymn to Christ at cockcrow.
2. They swore not to commit any crime.
3. Later on in the day they met for the Agapè-Eucharist.

[1] 1 Cor. 12. *Cf.* L. Duchesne, *Origines du Culte Chrétien*, p. 48, Paris, 1909.

[2] *English Hymnal*, No. 269; *Songs of Praise*, No. 34.

CHAPTER VII

TERTULLIAN, CYPRIAN, AND THE HOURS OF SERVICE

Tertullian

c. A.D. 200

S. PAUL, Pliny, Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, used to form the bridge for fasting-communion.

But Tertullian said nothing about any rule of fasting-communion, although he wrote a whole book about fasting, and was so fanatical an ascetic that he ended by leaving the Catholic Church and becoming an avowed Montanist. If he had ever heard of fasting-communion he would have been the last man to omit all mention of it when he sat down to write his *De Jejunio*.

There are, however, two passages in other books of his which do duty among the 'evidences.'

1. Tertullian wrote to his wife on the subject of her marrying again if he died. Supposing she married a pagan, he said :—

> Will not your husband know what you taste before all your food? Even if he knows it to be bread, will he not suppose it to have been treated in some shocking way? Will he endure it with suspicion whether it be bread or poison?[1]

[1] '*Quod secreto ante omnem cibum gustes*': *Ad Uxorem*, II. 5. I give the latest and most intelligible translation, that by Prof. F. C. Burkitt in the *Times*, Feb. 3rd, 1923. As he there says, the 'unseemly custom' at this time was 'to nibble a bit of it before meals.' Other translations are 'before all food,' 'before every meal,' and 'will he not believe it to be that which it is said to be?'

This is a reference to the strange custom of taking away from the service in church some of the sacred food of the Eucharist and keeping it for consumption at home in an *arca* or casket. The custom led to superstition: the reserved Sacrament was carried about as a charm to prevent shipwreck, and taken as an antidote against poison (naturally, in such case, before food), but gradually the custom died out. Here is evidence of the way Tertullian's wife observed it; he does not say whether he himself did likewise, nor does he say that Christians in general did so, but he tells us incidentally that this was the way his wife said her prayers. She did so, perhaps before all meals, possibly before breakfast only, but there is no suggestion that this is the only or the right way to communicate; no one, unless he was ignorant of the custom of domestic reservation, could imagine that she went out to an early Celebration, or that any such service is implied.

2. The other passage from Tertullian is as follows:

> Although the Lord commanded the sacrament of the eucharist at meal-time and to all, we take it even in assemblies before dawn.[1]

Here, as Bishop John Wordsworth has pointed out,[2] the word *even* has been overlooked by those who regard it as an evidence of early Celebrations. The words 'even before dawn' imply a service at night ending in communion before the break of dawn, and they show not only that the service was held at other times, but that reception before dawn was then exceptional. In another book [3] Tertullian affirms distinctly that night-hours for

[1] *'Etiam antelucanis coetibus,' De Corona Militis*, 3.
[2] *The Ministry of Grace*, London, Longmans, 1901, p. 317.
[3] *De Fuga in Persecutione*, 14.

the Communion were exceptional, and to be resorted to in times of persecution.

S. Cyprian

c. A.D. 350

This may be a good place to say something about the still obscure question of the time of the Communion. We know that in early days it was celebrated in the evening and perhaps in the night,[1] and in the daytime also. In our present state of knowledge we may be content to conjecture that the service was at any hour which suited local convenience. Tertullian, as we have just seen, says that night was exceptional in his time, and Justin Martyr's account [2] fifty years earlier seems to imply daylight. A passage from S. Cyprian is given among the 'evidences' for fasting-communion; but it says nothing about fasting, and does not seem to refer to the general hour of the Eucharist at all. S. Cyprian is answering the people called Aquarians, who celebrated the Communion in the morning with bread and water only, and in the evening with the mixed chalice. He condemns this duplication of the service, and says:—

> Must we then celebrate the Lord's feast after supper that so we may offer the mixed cup by multiplying the Lord's feasts? It behoved Christ to offer about the evening of the day . . . but we celebrate the Lord's resurrection in the morning.' [3]

If he meant by this 'we celebrate the Eucharist in the morning,' it would only tell us that the service was some

[1] Wordsworth (*op. cit.*, 312-17) says midnight, but he gives conjecture only, with no positive evidence; and he seems to have been influenced by the Pliny mistake.

[2] See p. 22.

[3] *Ep.*, LXII. 16.

time before midday, just as it is, indeed, for an Anglican to-day who stays for the Communion after morning prayer. He does not tell us whether it was early in the morning or not. But S. Cyprian's literal and probably real meaning is that 'we celebrate Easter in the morning,' which is a natural and ancient custom.[1]

The Hours of the Service

No more 'evidences' than these three—Pliny, Tertullian, Cyprian—have been put forward until the comparatively late era of the fourth century;[2] and, as we have seen, they all fail when examined, and only one of them (the case of Tertullian's wife) refers to food at all. They are in fact of no more use to-day than the forgeries themselves. But we may as well here anticipate, and say something about the hours of service in later ages.

We learn from S. Basil, *c.* 350, that in Egypt the monks kept the reserved Sacrament as a rule in their own houses, and partook of it whenever they chose.[3] In the fourth century—at Hippo in 392—evening Communions were relegated to the annual commemoration on Maundy Thursday; and at Hippo the normal Eucharist was ordered to be before the *prandium* or midday dinner. S. Epiphanius in Cyprus, *c.* A.D. 390 or 400, says that on the Sundays the Communion was at dawn in order that Sunday might be a day of feasting, just as on Wednesdays and Fridays the Communion was at 3 p.m., because

[1] Bishop J. Wordsworth's comment (*op. cit.*, 317 n.) is: 'The Easter vigil and that before the birthday of a martyr would, however, be exceptions, and the Liturgy is celebrated by the Greeks at about 1 a.m. in the Holy Sepulchre to this day.'

[2] I have added below (pp. 54-6) three Early Church Orders which might be put forward with as good reason.

[3] Basil, *Ep.*, 93.

they were days of fasting.[1] In the Dark Ages it tended to be at 9 a.m.

Afternoon and Evening Communions

But, curiously enough, afternoon and evening Communions continued into the thirteenth century in Lent and other fast-days. This was not because of any idea of fasting-communion, but because reception was held to break the penitential fast, and the rule in many places for long was that in strictness no substantial meal was taken before the afternoon or evening—the *prandium*, in fact, was omitted. The idea that communion broke the fast was in part mystical, but in part also physical: for originally the Communion was part of a substantial meal; and for long after the Agapè had been separated from the Communion, the eucharistic food was itself substantial, for more wine was consumed than now, and the breads were like small breakfast-rolls as late as the sixth-century Ravenna mosaics and the eighth-century *Ordo Romanus I.*

Three instances[2] will suffice to illustrate the continuance of these afternoon and evening Celebrations:[3]

1. *The Pilgrimage of Etheria*, *c.* 385, tells us that at Jerusalem, then a great religious centre, the Communion service was at 3 p.m. on Wednesdays and Fridays.

2. *Theodulph of Orleans*, *c.* 800, says that the Communion in Lent was in the later afternoon, and was immediately followed by Evensong.

[1] See p. 64.

[2] See for S. Ambrose on the 'evening sacrifice,' p. 58.

[3] The subject is dealt with by the Rev. F. W. Puller, *Concerning the Fast before Communion*, London, 1903, pp. 17, 18, where these examples are given. See also pp. 58, 76, 85, below.

3. *Peter of Blois*, *c.* 1200, says that on ordinary fasts the Communion was after midday, but that in Lent it was after 3 p.m., followed immediately by Evensong at nightfall. After this people went home to supper, which was their first meal, or at all events their first substantial meal, for the day.

As Puller says,[1] there is no doubt at all about evening Communions. In this he differs from earlier writers like Liddon ;[2] but in saying that the hour does not matter so long as the communicant is fasting he was making a dangerous concession to his opponents, because he did not then realise that the evidence for this was breaking down.[3]

[1] *Op. cit.*
[2] H. P. Liddon, *Evening Communions*, 1860 and 1876.
[3] See p. 29.

CHAPTER VIII

EARLY CHURCH ORDERS

The Reception of Milk and Honey

3rd Century

THAT the Agapè-Eucharist traditions still, in the third century, when the Eucharist had developed a stately ceremonial, kept people immune from the idea that other food ought not to precede the Sacrament, is curiously illustrated by the custom of administering milk and honey to neophytes, at their first communion, between the administration of the two species of the Eucharist. It will be simplest if I transcribe the passage from Dr. Brightman's description of the baptismal rites, and refer the reader there for references :[1]

> The bishop breaks the consecrated Bread, and communicates each of the neophytes, saying : 'The heavenly Bread in Christ Jesus,' and the communicant answers 'Amen.' The presbyters or the deacons follow with the three chalices and administer successively the water, to be received as a symbol of the inward effect of the bodily washing of baptism ; the milk and honey, as a symbol of the Promised Land which the neophyte has entered after crossing the Jordan of Baptism ; and the consecrated Wine ; each with the curious formula, 'In God the Father Almighty,' to which the neophyte answers 'Amen,'

[1] *Essays on the Early History of the Church and the Ministry*, p. 352, ed. H. B. Swete, London, Macmillan, 1918.

'And the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost and the holy Church,' to which again the neophyte replies 'Amen.'

The Egyptian Church Order and the Verona Fragment

3rd Century

The *Egyptian Church Order* (with the *Verona Latin Fragment*,[1] a palimpsest discovered in 1900 by Dr. Hauler) is now considered a genuine document of Hippolytus, the champion of extreme asceticism at Rome in the third century. Its significance here is (as Connolly recognises) that it deals with the Holy Week fast and does not suggest fasting-communion.[2] There are Arabic and Coptic versions of it. The eighth book of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, an unorthodox Syrian work of the fourth century, also derives from it, as does the *Testamentum Domini* (discovered in 1899), which may be of the fourth or fifth century or later.[3] Both the *Fragment* and the *Testamentum* mention fasting at Easter, and also the superstition that the Holy Communion was an antidote against poison.

The Egyptian Church Order

No one at Easter before the oblation is made shall receive, for he who acts thus, his fast is not reckoned to him. . . . But let every faithful man hasten, before

[1] E. Hauler, *Didascaliae Apostolorum Fragmenta*, 1900. J. Cooper and A. J. Maclean, *The Testament of our Lord*, Edinburgh, 1902. F. X. Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, Paderborn, 1905. *Apostolic Constitutions*, Book VIII., English trans., Ante-Nicene Christian Library, T. & T. Clark.

[2] Prof. E. Schwartz, *Ueber die pseudoapostolischen Kirchenordnungen*, Strassburg, 1910. R. H. Connolly, *The So-called Egyptian Church Order*, Cambridge, 1916, vol. VIII., No. 4.

[3] Cooper and Maclean ascribe it to c. 350, and so do Dr. Zahn and Dom Morin; Dr. Harnack ascribes it to c. 400; and Monseigneur Battiffol and Dr. Funk date it in the fifth century or later.

he tastes anything else, to receive the eucharist. For if any one receives in faith, should anything deadly be given to him, after this it will not be able to hurt him.[1]

Here the faithful are told to keep up the penitential fast of Good Friday and Easter Even till the last moment, and not to fall into the temptation of breaking this fast before it is broken by the Easter communion. As Connolly says, 'no ideas connected with "fasting communion" were present.'

Testamentum Domini

4th or 5th Century

This is an expansion of the former document.

Let the bishop command that they proclaim that no one taste anything until the offering is completed. And the whole body of the church shall receive a new food. . . . But if any one before he approacheth and receiveth of that eucharist eat something else, he sinneth and his fast is not reckoned to him.

But always let the faithful take care that before he eat he partake of the eucharist, that he may be incapable of receiving injury.[2]

There it also stated, but in rather stronger terms, that the Good Friday and Easter Even fast is not to be broken till the 'new food' is received at Easter; all the merit of the previous fasting will be lost if the person breaks down at the last moment. The superstition about the Sacrament 'nibbled' at home being an antidote against poison is repeated.[3] None the less, the superstition died out, and also the custom of receiving at home.

[1] *Nemo in Pascha antequam oblata fiat percipiat . . . Omnis autem fidelis festinet, antequam aliut* [sic] *gustet eucharistiam percipere.* Hauler, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-17.

[2] Cooper and Maclean, *op. cit.*, II. 20, 25, pp. 134, 137. *Cf.* H. Tattam, *Apostolic Constitutions in English and Coptic*, § 58.

[3] See p. 49.

CHAPTER IX

THE FOURTH CENTURY: AMBROSE, BASIL, AND GREGORY NAZIENZEN

S. Ambrose

A.D. 374

THE links of the chain which was once supposed to reach to the Apostles are falling off one by one. Our next two are from S. Ambrose. They both refer, not to fasting-communion, but to the Lenten fast; and we must carefully avoid that confusion between the two which has led so many astray. Such penitential fasting has no connection with the idea that the Communion must be received on an empty stomach.

There are two passages in the writings of S. Ambrose which have been misused owing to this confusion.

1. He is speaking of the fast throughout Lent and its advantages as a preparation for Easter communion:

> This table is purchased at the price of hunger; and that cup, inebriating with its sobriety, is sought out by thirst for the heavenly sacraments: for the Lord said, Ho, ye that thirst, come to the water, etc.[1]

2. Again, speaking of Lent he says:

> And if hunger does force you to a daily *prandium*, or if intemperance throws aside the fast, yet preserve yourself the more by the heavenly feast. . . . Delay a little

[1] *De Elia et Jejunio*, x. 33: *Opera*, I. p. 545, Parisiis, 1686.

while : the end of the day is not far off ; nay, many days are of the kind when men come to church directly after noon, and hymns are sung and the oblation offered.[1]

So far from advocating fasting-communion, Ambrose here says that if you have broken the Lent fast by eating dinner (the midday *prandium*), you ought *the more* to communicate afterwards. Incidentally the passage is an example of the afternoon and evening Communion in Lent (the hours varied on different days in Milan), which Ambrose, a few sentences further on, calls ' the evening sacrifice '—*sacrificium vespertinum*.[2]

S. Basil

c. A.D. 370

The next ' evidence ' brings us to the Eastern Church. It is thus printed in *Fasting Reception* :—

S. Basil, Bishop of Caesarea, in Cappadocia, who died A.D. 380, says, in regard to priests, ' It is not possible to venture on the sacred work (of Celebration) without fasting.'

What S. Basil really wrote was as follows. It is part of the first Homily on fasting, in which he is urging people to keep the fast before Easter, and it has nothing whatever to do with fasting-communion :—

It hallows the Nazarite, it perfects the priest ; for without fasting it is not possible to undertake the holy ministry (*ad sanctum ministerium accedere*), not only in the present mystical and true worship but also in that type-worship which was offered according to the law.[3]

The reference to the worship of the Jewish law points

[1] In *Psalmum* CXVIII. 8, § 48 : *Opera*, I. 1073, Parisiis, 1686.
[2] For the fuller text of Ambrose see Appendix, p. 126.
[3] *De Jejunio*, I. 6 : *Opera*, II. p. 6, Migne, vol. XXIX. p. 171.

to Leviticus 10 [8-9], where priests are forbidden to drink wine when they go into the tabernacle; the reference to the Nazarites takes us to Numbers 6 [3], where we learn that they abstained from wine. Basil has just mentioned Samson, another total abstainer, in the same connection, and Hannah, whose prayer was offered just after she had eaten, though she had eaten sparingly.[1] In speaking of Samson's mother he has just said: 'What rendered Samson, that mighty hero, invincible? Was it not fasting with which he was conceived in the womb of his mother? Fasting conceived him, fasting was his nurse, fasting made him a man—that fasting which the angel prescribed to his mother, saying, "Whatever cometh of the vine thou shalt not eat, and wine and strong drink thou shalt not drink."'

In fact, the passage is valuable as showing that what S. Basil meant by fasting in this Homily, as well as in the second Homily on the subject, is abstemiousness and self-denial, especially the avoidance of excess in strong drink. As for such fasting before 'undertaking the holy ministry,' there are few ministers to-day who would not agree with him and say that they do not drink alcohol or eat a heavy meal before taking a service.

S. Gregory Nazianzen

A.D. 370

The next 'evidence' is from S. Gregory Nazianzen, the friend of S. Basil. But all he said was this:—

> He celebrates the mystery of the Passover with his disciples in an upper chamber, and after supper, and the

[1] 1 Samuel 1 [9].

day before the Passion ; but we in houses of prayer, and before supper, and after his Resurrection.[1]

If S. Gregory meant literally what he here says, this sentence describes the Holy Communion as after food. There were three meals in the day :— [2]

	Greek.		Latin.
c. 9 a.m. :	*Acratisma*	(Breakfast)	*Jantaculum*
Noon :	*Ariston*	(Dinner)	*Prandium*
Before sunset :	*Deipnon*	(Supper)	*Coena*

Therefore 'before supper' means literally 'after breakfast and dinner.' In the same way 'before the *prandium*' means 'after the *jantaculum*' or breakfast, which was a light meal consisting of bread, wine, honey, and olives.

It may be worth noting that it is not till about seven hundred years later that the eleventh-century writer Nicetas gives a different meaning to the words 'before supper,' rendering the sentence, '*nos in sacris domibus et jejuni et post reditum Christi ad vitam, illud celebramus*' ; [3] but even in the eleventh century *jejunus* did not mean what Roman Catholics mean by fasting-communion, as we shall see.

[1] *Oratio* XL., *In Sanctum Baptisma* : *Opera*, Parisiis, 1609, I. p. 659.

[2] Nettleship and Sandys, *Dictionary of Classical Antiquities*, 1908, art. 'Meals.'

[3] Nicetas' Commentary, see S. Greg. Naz., *Opera*, Parisiis, 1609, II. col. 1069.

CHAPTER X

THE FOURTH CENTURY: CHRYSOSTOM AND OTHERS

S. Chrysostom

A.D. 347-407

TWO passages from S. Chrysostom have been quoted since the seventeenth century by Roman Catholic writers, and from them were reprinted by some Anglican clergymen in the nineteenth century.

But there are really three that bear on the question:—

1. The first is from a sermon in favour of abstemiousness *after* communion, 'for,' he says, 'after communion follows drunkenness':—

> But this should be your time for fasting and sobriety. . . . And indeed you do fast before you partake, so that somehow or other you may show yourself worthy of the communion; but when you have received, and ought to continue your temperance, you ruin all.[1]

He is here advocating temperance after as well as before communion. To prepare oneself by fasting is not at all the same as fasting reception: it was, as we have said, universally practised by Presbyterians.[2]

2. The second extract was omitted from the usual

[1] *In Epist. I. ad Cor.*, Hom. XXVII.: *Opera*, Parisiis, 1718, X. 249*b*.

[2] This idea of fasting in Lent and on vigils as a preparation for Communion is frequently mentioned by Chrysostom: *e.g.* 'The fathers . . . formed the scheme of forty days of fasting, praying, hearing, church-going, so that we . . . might approach with a clear conscience.' *Opera*, tom. I., *In eos qui Pascha jejunant.*

'evidences,'[1] because it is on the other side. It also refers only to the general fast of mortification, and suggests that the fast was previous to the day of communion. Chrysostom here says, 'You may receive, whether you have previously fasted or not.' The idea of fasting-communion has not yet crossed any one's mind.

> He who is not fasting, if he approach with a clear conscience, keeps the Passover, whether he receive the Communion to-day or to-morrow, or whenever he does.[2]

In one of his sermons S. Chrysostom denies that he has baptized people after he has eaten, and adds, amid great applause, that if he had he would have followed the example of S. Paul, who baptized the gaoler after supper, and of Christ, who, after supper, gave the Communion to his disciples. After the applause he bursts out with: 'Really this is great! . . . this is the panegyric of the people! It is my crown and your fruit.'[3]

3. The passage from the Letter to Cyriacus I have already quoted among the forgeries.[4] It is, however, probably not a very late forgery, and may give evidence of some ignorant writer's mind, perhaps in the sixth or seventh century. The writer repudiates the idea of having communicated people 'after they had eaten,' going on to say that, even if he had, he would only have followed the example of the Lord. The appearance of the forger is generally evidence of the novelty of a doctrine; but in this case the meaning does not seem to be any newer than that people do not communicate after a meal, and therefore the document might be from this

[1] *E.g.* from *Fasting Reception.*

[2] *In eos qui Pascha jejunant*: *Opera*, I. 612*b*.

[3] *Sermo antequam iret in Exilium*: *Opera*, III. 418*a* (Paris, Montfaucon, as above, 1718).

[4] See p. 40.

internal evidence as early as the fifth century. The English communicant who 'stays behind' for a twelve o'clock Communion (or, for that matter, one who receives at an evening Communion before his supper) does not communicate 'after he has eaten,' but before his dinner (or supper). People read more into passages like this than is really there, because they start with the no-breakfast idea. As we have seen, the point of writers in the fifth and sixth centuries was the entirely right desire to prevent communion after the excesses of the *prandium*.

It is the more significant that there is no hint of fasting-communion in all Chrysostom's works, because they are very voluminous and abound in references to the customs of the time.

Theophilus of Alexandria
A.D. 412

It was the custom to fast on the Epiphany, and at the same time it was forbidden to fast on a Sunday. What then was to be done when the Epiphany fell on a Sunday?

The Patriarch Theophilus was asked, and his answer shows that he had no ideas about the Communion being the first food to pass one's lips. Unfortunately, this 'canonical answer' has been omitted from the lists of evidences with which we are dealing. Theophilus said that the feast and the fast were to be combined, the feast to be kept by a morning meal, the fast by the evening Communion usual on fasting-days, and that the meal was to be a light one so as to preserve the character of the Epiphany fast:—[1]

[1] Σύνταγμα Κανόνων, tom. IV., Athens, 1854. A. Gallandius, *Bibliotheca Vet. Pat. Venetiis*, 1770, VII. p. 603. The Eastern Church still counts this answer among its canons.

Let us compromise this, and prudently accommodate one to the other. So that by partaking of a few dates we may at once avoid the heresies which dishonour the resurrection-day of our Lord Jesus Christ, and pay due respect to the fast by awaiting the evening Communion which will be celebrated on that day, God willing. Let us therefore on that day have the Communion after three o'clock.

S. Epiphanius

c. A.D. 400

Epiphanius, the quarrelsome bishop in Cyprus, is not in our list of 'evidences,' but he must be mentioned here, since his name has sometimes been brought forward. He describes with great detail and a regrettable lack of clarity the observances and the various fasting peculiarities of his time (such as abstaining from bread, cheese, or fruit, wearing sackcloth, not washing, lying on the ground). He states that Celebrations were 'ordered by the Apostles' on Wednesdays and Fridays and the Lord's Day, and that the Celebration broke the fast on Wednesdays and Fridays in Lent at 3 p.m., whereas on Sunday it was at dawn because 'it is forbidden to fast on the Lord's Day.' [1]

He gives us an unconsciously forbidding picture of the half-barbarous Pharisaism to which the Church had descended in his time; he also tells us that the Church forbids not only 'idolatry and murder,' but also 'theatres, and horse-shows, and hunting, and concerts.'

Indeed, it is a matter of indifference to us Christians of to-day whether these writers of the fourth and fifth centuries advocated fasting-communion or not. It

[1] *Adversus Haereses*, I. pp. 1105-6, III., II. 21, Coloniae, 1682.

happens that they did not, and that they have been quoted as if they did.

Egyptian Ascetics

4th Century

Dr. W Bright, doing his best with his collection, which consists of six of the usual 'instances,' quoted uncritically, and two of the forgeries, added to Liddon's book two original contributions, which therefore ought to be mentioned here.[1] One, which is Armenian, is another forgery, and he himself admits that the source contains 'some matter of a later date' than Isaac the Great, who lived in the fourth century. The other is in quite another way equally valueless; but as he quotes it, we will do so too. In the latter years of Athanasius, he says, Rufinus describes his visits to the Egyptian monks: -

> 'Abbot Hor was accustomed non prius corporalem cibum sumere quam spiritalem Christi Communionem acciperet.' Further on he says of Apollonius in almost identical language, 'it was his custom that the brethren who were with him did not take food until they had received the Lord's Communion about the ninth hour of the day, and sometimes afterwards so continued' (*i.e.* took no food) 'until evening,' when they 'took food.'[2]

Apparently Dr. Bright really expected people to believe—and he himself must have believed—that this was an early instance of the rule of fasting-communion. What it illustrates, of course, is the custom which we have

[1] H. P. Liddon, *Evening Communions*, London, 1872: Appendix by W. Bright, pp. 28-32. The reader may like to know what his six instances are: Pliny, Tertullian, Augustine, Basil, Ambrose, Chrysostom. His forgeries are Chrysostom and Timothy. Liddon himself gives Cyprian, Ambrose, Socrates, the Council of Trullo, and Pliny, Tertullian and Augustine twice over.

[2] I quote the extract as he gives it. His reference is to Rosweyd's *Vitae Patrum*.

already noticed [1] of putting off the Eucharist on fast-days until 3 p.m., because the penitential fast was broken by the Eucharist; and it simply tells us that these monks kept Lent all the year round. But that was nothing for the Egyptian anchorites; the curious can read about their amazing ways in the *Paradise of the Holy Fathers*, without wishing to imitate them: about Anthony, who lived on bread and salt, and was wont to spend three, four, and even six days without any food at all; about Isidore of Nitria, who never sat at table and never washed; about Dorotheos, who never lay down to sleep, and whose daily rations were six ounces of bread and a bunch of herbs; about Ptolemy of the Klimax, who for fifteen years drank nothing but the dew which he collected in sponges during the months of December and January each year; or about Macarius, a retired merchant from Alexandria, who, not to be outdone by the monks of Tabenna, did not for seven years touch anything that had been baked or cooked, and sat naked in the desert, 'where the gnats were large and resembled wasps,' for six months, till 'his skin was so bitten and swollen that it was like the hide of an elephant,' and, when he returned to his cell, the monks only recognised him by his voice.[2]

The example of men like this was thrown out to cultivated and comfortable Victorians as an argument for fasting-communion, so gravelled were its advocates for evidence. Yet with all their ingenuity at professional self-mortification, not one of these Egyptian ascetics thought of saying that it was necessary to communicate on an empty stomach.

[1] See p. 52.

[2] Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The Paradise of the Holy Fathers*, translated out of the Syriac (London, Chatto & Windus, 1907), I. pp. 12, 89, 91, 135, xvii, and 118. One monk drank nothing all Lent (II. p. 17).

CHAPTER XI

S. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

The Council at Hippo in 392

LET us state plainly at the outset, since S. Augustine has been so continuously misrepresented for so many centuries, that he did not advocate fasting-communion, but recommended in his letter to Januarius that a refection should be eaten before communion. In his great reverence for his master, Ambrose,[1] he could hardly have done otherwise, but he took one step beyond S. Ambrose by securing that men should not communicate after the *prandium*, and in this step he was entirely justified.

Temperance at meals is a modern virtue. The ancients used to eat grossly, and the habit of revolting gluttony and drunkenness at meal-times continued through the Dark and Middle Ages, and lingered in a mitigated form into the nineteenth century. The elder Pliny (A.D. 23-79) was regarded as a remarkable economiser of time because he only spent three hours over the *coena*. How other people behaved can hardly be described. S. Chrysostom tells us that both law-courts and council-chambers were closed afternoon and evening because people were then unfit for the administration of their affairs, 'even to bursting.'[2] This, strangely

[1] Ambrose had commended to some communion after the *prandium*. See pp. 58, 126-8.

[2] *Ad Populum Antiochenum*, IX. 1, Migne, vol. XLIX. p. 104.

enough, is the original reason why weddings till lately had to be in the morning, and still must be before 3 p.m.[1]

We need not wonder that the bishops tried to supply a corrective by pressing Lenten and other fasts. The wonder is that they did not all along forbid communion after the *prandium*. No doubt, what deterred them was the example of the Lord, and the consequent tradition which dissociated the Eucharist from all idea of fasting.

Even as late as 1270, when S. Thomas Aquinas finally established the present Roman rule of fasting-communion, he gives as one justification, '*propter periculum vomitus et inebrietatis.*'

Our sympathies must therefore be with Augustine. In 389, as a layman, he had deplored the orgies of African Christians; in 392, as priest, he dominated the council at Hippo Regis, a town in Numidia, not far from Carthage, in North Africa. No doubt the local bishops met at Hippo on his account, and it was he who caused to be passed the canons which forbade the laity feasting in church, the clergy carousing in taverns, and the clergy celebrating after dinner.

This canon of Hippo, then, concerns the celebrant only. Augustine does not venture to tackle the laity yet; though in the letter to Januarius eight years later (A.D. 400) he quietly sweeps the laity in, by using the word 'received' (*accipitur*) instead of 'celebrated' (*celebrentur*) as in the canon.[2] Here is this canon, No. 28, as it has come down to us:

Ut sacramenta altaris non nisi a jejunis hominibus celebrentur, excepto uno die anniversario quo	That the sacraments of the altar be not celebrated except by *fasting men*, the one yearly day being ex-

[1] *Cf.* p. 35.

[2] See p. 121.

coena Dominica celebratur: nam si aliquorum pomeridiano tempore defunctorum, sive episcoporum sive caeterorum commendatio facienda est, solis orationibus fiat; si illi qui faciunt jam pransi inveniuntur.[1]

cepted when the Lord's Supper is celebrated [Maundy Thursday]. If a memorial is to be offered for any dead person (whether for bishops or others) in the afternoon, it must only be with prayers, if those who do it have already *had dinner*.

The passage shows what 'fasting' (*jejunus*) then meant. It meant 'not having dined' (*non pransus*); for it was those who had had their dinner (*jam pransi inveniuntur*) who were not to celebrate.

Fasting in fact meant, not 'having had no breakfast' (the *prandium* was the second meal of the day), but 'not having dined'; and it was an age when people were habitually fuddled and disgusting after dinner. *Jejunus* meant a condition of *abstemiousness*; and this is what it still means to-day. If you say, 'He always fasts in Lent,' you do not mean, 'He eats no breakfast in Lent'; but, 'He practises bodily self-denial,' or 'He lives abstemiously.'

We must be careful not to read the 'No breakfast' idea into an age that meant 'No dinner'—no drunken *prandium*.

A modest demand—that the celebrant should not run the risk of being intoxicated! Yet even this was so new a decree [2] that it was not at first entirely successful. For it had to be re-enacted by a council at Carthage in 397, and was again re-enacted at another council of Carthage (Augustine being present) in 419.[3]

[1] *Bibliotheca Juris Canonici*, H. Justel, I. p. 349, Parisiis, 1661.

[2] That it was something new is shown also by the form *Placuit* and *Ut*. See p. 72.

[3] For the ninth century see p. 93.

A modest demand! Yet this is the first local enactment that brings any kind of abstinence into connection with communion. No œcumenical council has ever pronounced upon the subject before or since; and the nearest approach to a general council is the mention of fasting-communion (in its true Roman Catholic sense) at the Council of Constance in 1415, in a decree which also forbids the chalice to the laity.

In 430 the Vandals, who had invaded Africa through the treachery of Count Boniface, the friend and disciple of Augustine, laid siege to Hippo. The Church never recovered from their ravages. They were followed by the Moors, and the once powerful African Church vanished under Islam. That Church had a tragic history, and its intolerant and fierce tradition of theology which culminated in Augustine has done immeasurable harm to the religion of Christ; but in this decree of the Council at Hippo, which forbade a priest to celebrate after the *prandium*, it must have our entire approval.

Augustine's Letter to Januarius [1]

A.D. 400

With Augustine of Hippo, then, at the end of the fourth century, we come to a rule, not indeed of fasting-communion, but a rule upon the subsequent misunderstanding of which the custom of fasting-communion was ultimately established. We also arrive at the worst distortions of Christian theology in this great man of genius who never recovered from the Manichæism of his earlier life; so that the subsequent history of Christian theology has been the gradual recovery from Augus-

[1] See Appendix.

tinianism.[1] Unfortunately, Augustine's works were for long regarded as almost equal in authority to the Bible, and in this letter of his he was misunderstood.

Augustine approaches the subject in a tentative and uncertain way. He is writing against those people who copy some custom which they have observed on their travels, and introduce it into their own churches, to the distress of the congregation. He is concerned with a Maundy custom, which some one had introduced, to the annoyance apparently of Januarius. He actually recommends a light refreshment before communion, and he also allows the Communion to be received after supper on Maundy Thursday; but he states, in the crucial passage upon which subsequent Roman Catholic practice has been based, that 'fasting' was the custom 'throughout the whole world': this was not strictly true, but it was a common form of expression, just as a Roman, or an Anglican, will to-day speak of 'the whole Church' when he really means his own church:—

> But must we on that account blame the whole Church, because it is always received by fasting men? Nay, but for this reason, it 'seemed good to the Holy Ghost that,' in honour of so great a sacrament, the Lord's body should enter the mouth of a Christian before other food; for on that account this custom is observed throughout the whole world. Nor indeed because the Lord gave it after food, therefore ought the brethren to meet for the reception of that sacrament after dinner or supper [*pransi* or *coenati*].[2]

[1] For the horrible doctrines of Augustine see the two Bampton Lectures on the Atonement and on the Fall by Dr. Rashdall and Dr. N. P. Williams.

[2] *Letter to Januarius*: *Opera*, Migne, vol. XXXIII. p. 199 (*Ep.* LIV.). The whole letter, in Latin with a very literal translation, is printed in our Appendix, pp. 116-26.

Certainly fasting is mentioned here, and we can see that a little misunderstanding would easily fix the extract in Gratian from Augustine's words into the mould of Aquinas in the thirteenth century. But for the credit of Augustine it must be stated that :—

1. The whole letter is hesitating and obscure. Augustine is dealing with a question raised by Januarius, an 'aggrieved parishioner' apparently, who had written to him about the different customs in various churches, and had asked, (1) Should there be both a morning and an evening Communion on Maundy Thursday, (2) or should the Lenten fast be kept, and the Communion postponed till after supper, or (3) should they keep up the Hippo custom and postpone supper till after the Communion service ?

2. S. Augustine hesitates because he knows and admits that the example of Christ is against him. But he had been deeply concerned with the scandal caused by men coming drunk to the Communion after the *prandium*. He had therefore taken the lead in prohibiting the *prandium* before communion.

3. That had been done at the local Council of Hippo eight years before. It was then an innovation : this is shown by the use of the words '*Placuit*, etc., it seemed good to the Holy Ghost' ; for, when a council enacted something that was not in the apostolical tradition, it claimed by these words that it had divine authority for a new move.[1]

[1] The meaning of *Placuit* is explained by Athanasius. The Council of Nicaea, he said, 'without prefixing consulate, month and day, wrote concerning Easter, *Decreta sunt* as follows, for it did then seem good that there should be a general compliance. But about the faith they wrote not *decretum est*, but *thus believes the Catholic Church*, and thereupon they confessed how the faith lay, in order to show that their own ideas were not new but

4. Augustine is therefore anxious to show Januarius that by now the custom is universal.

5. His justification for departing from the example of Christ is that S. Paul had transferred the Eucharist to some time before supper. We know now that he was mistaken in that supposition.

6. 'Fasting men' did not, then, mean 'men who have not had any breakfast.' It meant 'men who have not dined.' There were three meals (as we have explained on p. 60), the dinner (*prandium*) being the second. In other passages elsewhere Augustine himself uses the word *jejunus* (fasting) as equivalent to *non pransus* (not having dined).[1]

7. 'Before other food.'[2] Augustine probably meant 'having eaten nothing since breakfast.' His point is that although the Lord gave it *after* food, the Church (or the African Church since 392) now has the Communion *before* food (*prius quam ceteri cibi*). That is to say, not (as in the Gospels) as the culmination of a meal, but before a meal instead.

8. This sentence, 'before other food,' is indeed the point of the whole letter, which is in answer to Januarius' question as to whether the Maundy Eucharist ought to be before or after supper. To this Augustine answers that, although the Lord gave it after supper, *both* practices are

apostolical, and that what they wrote down was no discovery of theirs, but is the same as was taught by the Apostles.' *Opera*, tom. I., pars II., Parisiis, 1698, p. 719*d*. The matter is discussed at length by Bishop A. T. Kingdon, *Fasting Communion*, London, 1875, pp. 62-5, 308-24.

[1] *E.g.* in the Letter to Casulanus, *alios habeant Sabbato prandentes, alios jejunantes*, Migne, vol. XXXIII. p. 139. Other examples are given by Dr. Kingdon, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-5.

[2] *Fasting Reception* alters this substantially by giving the translation, 'should take the precedence of *all* other food.'

right, to communicate before supper or after it, on Maundy Thursday.

9. Indeed, he shows what fasting meant for him by going on to say :—

> I think this had better be done at such an hour that he who has also kept the fast [*i.e.* the Lenten fast] may come to the oblation [the Communion] after the refection at three o'clock.[1] Wherefore we compel none to take the *prandium* before that Lord's Supper,[2] but we dare also forbid none.[3]

The True Significance of Augustine's Letter

S. Augustine's letter to Januarius is most important, because a passage from it was quoted again and again in the ten following centuries, and was the foundation upon which Aquinas based the rule of fasting-communion. Writers like Dr. Liddon[4] said that its great value was that it showed the custom to be general as early as A.D. 400. To many indeed, at the present day, this would be of little importance, for it was a barbarous age : and, as we have already pointed out, the same letter to Januarius shows the custom of not bathing in Lent to have been general. But the more we look into it, the more certain it appears that fasting-communion (*i.e.* no food passing the lips during the day) was not alluded to by Augustine.

Indeed, the notion that it is wrong to eat or drink any-

[1] We might have added as a minor addition to our list of forgeries that seven MSS. altered 'after' (*post*) to 'before' (*ante*), and this, oddly enough, was accepted in the English translation of 1872 published by Clark of Edinburgh.

[2] He seems here to mean the Eucharist, and not a special Maundy feast, nor the Agapè, which in Augustine's writings has become a mere charity supper.

[3] See Appendix, p. 124.

[4] Liddon, *Evening Communions*, 1872, p. 16. He uses the word 'œcumenical.'

thing at any time before communion does not seem to have crossed the mind of Augustine or of any other writer till long after. This is the conclusion to which I am driven by a consideration of the evidence, and my chief reasons are the following :—

1. There is an enormous amount of literature about fasting in the Fathers; but such fasting is always 'ecclesiastical,' *i.e.* abstinence from food in Lent and on other fast-days; and this has nothing to do with fasting-communion.

2. For three or four centuries the writings of the first thousand years have been ransacked for evidence of fasting-communion. Nothing has been found but the dozen instances from the Fathers and the few references in local councils, all of which disappear on closer examination, as we are seeing. This produces an overwhelming impression that—unexpected as it may seem—the idea of fasting-communion was not yet above the horizon. A simple explanation of this is that the Holy Communion had been (as we now know) traditionally associated with a meal, and that therefore the materialistic idea of requiring an empty stomach at the reception of a spiritual gift did not occur to Christians at all.

3. The Council at Hippo in 392 is concerned with a particular abuse, that priests celebrated the Communion in a fuddled condition after the *prandium*. It therefore forbids this. But the fact of a canon being needed to prevent it, shows that it was common even for priests, and up till then not forbidden. It is not a matter of laymen taking the law into their own hands, but of priests acting under authority. The striking thing is, not that communion after dinner was forbidden then, but that it had been tolerated for so long. The Council

at Hippo, indeed, itself bears witness to the custom of celebrating funeral Eucharists after a feast (probably a relic of the once general funeral Agapè), for it goes on to say: 'If the funeral service of any dead person, whether of bishops or of any others, has to be taken in the afternoon, it must be only with prayers, if those who take it have already dined.' [1] To us it is astonishing that (the *prandium* being the drunken meal it was) Christendom should have waited for a comparatively obscure council at Hippo—under the impulse of a man of great genius—at the end of the fourth century before celebration immediately after this meal was condemned.

4. And lastly, let us turn to correct the continual repetition of one extract by ourselves repeating another passage, which the collectors of 'evidences' for fasting-communion do not usually quote, and which shows that the idea of what is now meant by fasting-communion had not even crossed Augustine's mind. He is saying that, although 'we' (*i.e.* the Council of Hippo) compel none to dine before communion on Maundy Thursday, while not daring to forbid it, yet that he personally thinks the best plan is to keep the Lenten fast as was usual up to 3 p.m., and then after the usual meal [2] to have the Communion. Here is another translation of this crucial and forgotten passage:—

> Now *I* think it is more seemly to celebrate the Eucharist on that day at such an hour as that one who has fasted may, after the refreshment which is taken at 3 p.m., come to the Oblation. Therefore we compel no one to dine

[1] 'Nam si aliquorum pomeridiano tempore defunctorum, sive episcoporum sive caeterorum, commendatio facienda est, solis orationibus fiat, si illi qui faciunt jam pransi inveniuntur.' P. 69.

[2] Probably a light meal. 'Refectio' may be translated 'refreshment' or 'refection.'

before that Supper of the Lord ; but we dare not forbid any one to do so.[1]

The way in which he refers as a matter of course to the usual breakfast after the Lenten fast being taken before the Holy Communion is the most significant piece of evidence in the whole letter. It was the general custom in Lent to omit the *prandium*, and not to eat any heavy meal till about 3 p.m. ; therefore this *refectio* was literally the breakfast (or almost so, if a light early meal of bread and wine and honey had already been taken). He recommends communion after this meal without any suggestion that he thinks it unusual.

Let us sum up and repeat again. Horrified at the drunkenness with which the *prandium* was associated, S. Augustine had persuaded the Council at Hippo to forbid priests to celebrate after it. This was entirely right, but it was an innovation, and the Council did not venture to include the laity. That it should not have been forbidden before is the astonishing thing ; but the example of the Lord weighed very heavily with the Church, and the Eucharist had been traditionally associated with a meal. S. Augustine, being a man of exceptional genius, broke away from this idea and carried the local bishops with him, in spite of his extreme reverence

[1] I have here used the translation by Dr. Bright ; but I have altered his rendering of 'prandere' as 'take his morning meal.' It is strange that he did not see that to alter the midday dinner to a 'morning meal' is to falsify not only this passage but the very essence of the whole letter, and of the Hippo Council upon which it is based.

The original is :—'Honestius autem arbitror eâ horâ fieri ut qui etiam jejunaverit post refectionem quae horâ nonâ fit ad oblationem possit occurrere. Quapropter neminem cogimus ante dominicam illam coenam prandere, sed nulli etiam contradicere audemus.'

But this passage has been tampered with more than once. I have already referred on p. 74 to the crucial substitution of 'ante' for 'post.' For other instances see p. 124.

for S. Ambrose, who had allowed communion after the *prandium*. He found, as he thought, scriptural justification for this overdue reform by assuming that S. Paul had changed the Eucharist after supper to a Eucharist before supper, though in this he was mistaken. The idea of no food of any sort before communion had never occurred to him; and now that the forgeries are cleared away, we know that it had never occurred to any one else in his time. He therefore recommends communion after the usual Lenten refection in the afternoon; but he says also that on Maundy Thursday the old custom of still having it after supper is reasonable and good.

The letter to Januarius is admittedly obscure, and the passage about communion after the three o'clock *refectio* may possibly refer to Maundy Thursday only, the simpler luncheon being suggested as an alternative to the dangerous *prandium* for this day only. It would still be true that Augustine wrote the letter, in answer to the point Januarius had raised, not to forbid but to approve communion after food. Holding this view at first, I was gradually moved to the wider conclusion by (1) the absence of any idea that food in itself, apart from excess, is a bar; (2) the allusion to the *refectio* as the normal light meal on fasting-days in place of the *prandium*, and the acknowledged fact that communion on fasting-days was normally after 3 p.m.; (3) the fact that Augustine's venerated master, Ambrose, allowed communion when the Lenten fast had been broken, even by the *prandium*.[1]

[1] For the text of S. Ambrose see Appendix, pp. 126-8.

CHAPTER XII

THE FIFTH CENTURY

Evening Communion in Egypt

c. A.D. 460

ODDLY enough, two 'evidences' are given to swell the little list in *Fasting Reception*, and they are also given in Liddon and Bright's tract,[1] though they are instances of evening Communions immediately after a meal. In the former book they are numbered 9 and 10 among the thirteen examples of 'Ancient Testimony,' as separate evidences, with Sozomen coming first; but they are really descriptions of the same thing. The compiler quotes these as arguments for fasting-communion, because he says that Sozomen mentions the custom 'only to condemn it.' But Sozomen does not condemn it. The compiler of *Fasting Reception* was probably misled by Liddon, who says of these Christians who followed the Lord's example, 'The historians who record their irregularity use language concerning it which sufficiently expresses the profound disgust which it excited in the Christian world.' But what Sozomen really says is simply that certain cities in Egypt celebrate the Eucharist on Saturdays[2] after dinner, contrary to the general custom. Let us put him down first :—

[1] H. P. Liddon's part of the tract, *Evening Communions*, 1874, appeared originally in the *Christian Remembrancer*, April 1860.

[2] I give the translation as it is in *Fasting Reception*, where it is referred to Bohn's edition; but I have altered 'Sabbath evenings'

> There are several cities and villages in Egypt, where, contrary to the usages established elsewhere, the people meet together on Saturday evenings, and, although they have dined previously [ἠριστηκότες ἤδη], partake of the mysteries.[1]

There is no word of condemnation ; neither is there in the passage from the historian Socrates, which is as follows :—

> The Egyptians who are neighbours of the Alexandrians and the inhabitants of the Thebaïs have their *synaxes* on Saturday ; they do not participate in the mysteries in the usual manner [2] [as is the custom for Christians]. For after they have fared well [εὐωχηθῆναι] and are filled with food of all kinds [καὶ παντοίων ἐδεσμάτων ἐμφορηθῆναι], when they come to eventide they partake of the mysteries.[3]

Here we have probably an interesting survival of the once universal custom of receiving the Communion in the evening after the Agapè.[4]

Curiously enough, although we find no mention of the 'no-breakfast' rule in the first six centuries (or for

to 'Saturday evenings.' The translation of τῷ Σαββάτῳ by 'Sabbath' must have given many ordinary readers the impression that it is Sunday evening Communions that are 'condemned.'

[1] The Greek text is in Sozomen's *Ecclesiastica Historia*, VII. 19, ed. Robertus Hussey, Oxon., 1860, II. p. 744.

[2] Οὐχ ὡς ἔθος δε Χριστιανοῖς. The word Χριστιανοῖς appears to be a later interpolation, for it does not occur in the sixth-century translation of Cassiodorus, nor in the independent translation of Strabo. Bishop Kingdon, *Fasting Communion*, London, 1875, p. 327.

[3] The Greek text is in Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History, according to the text of Hussey*, v. 22, p. 240, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1878.

[4] Duchesne thought its being on Saturday instead of Sunday was 'une institution postérieure,' *Origines du Culte Chrétien*, Paris, 1898, p. 235.

centuries after), and are only told in the last decade of the fourth century that at Hippo the Communion was not to be received after dinner, we do find four instances of the once universal custom of communion after food (besides the suggestion of S. Ambrose) in the fourth and fifth centuries :—

1. The attempt of the Council of Hippo to prevent communion after an early dinner, which must therefore have been a custom—a custom, too, which needed further councils to put it down.

2. Communion after supper on Maundy Thursday, approved by Augustine with the alternative of a light meal at 3 p.m., before the service (end of fourth century).

3. Bishop Theophilus' recommendation of a light meal on the Epiphany (fifth century).

4. This instance in Egypt of the survival of the Agapè in the sixth century.

The So-called Canons of Hippolytus

4th to 6th Century

The so-called Canons of Hippolytus were not included in the ' evidences ' ; for they had only been edited (from the Arabic) in 1870. At first they would have seemed a useful addition to the evidences, because Bishop Hippolytus died in A.D. 235 or 236. He was, however, a fiercely intolerant ascetic, quarrelled horribly with the tolerant Bishop of Rome, Callixtus, and went into schism.

The real Canons of Hippolytus are probably preserved in the *Egyptian Church Order* and the *Verona Fragment* ;

the so-called Canons are now considered to be an unskilful redaction of the fourth, fifth, or sixth century.[1] Their only value, therefore, is that they give a point of view later, and perhaps two centuries later, than Augustine.

In this document occurs the sentence :—

> Let none of the faithful taste anything before he has partaken of the mysteries, especially on the days of the sacred fast (*praesertim diebus jejunii sacri*).[2]

Bishop John Wordsworth says that this 'is clearly not so much a direction to fast in order to make a spiritual preparation for communion, as a direction to begin every day's work and food with a participation of the Eucharist.'[3] But the passage points to special fast days. Dom R. H. Connolly, looking at it from the Roman Catholic angle, thinks that the words 'appear to go beyond' the baptism fast and probably contemplate fasting-communion. The word *praesertim*, however, makes the meaning clear enough : the faithful are not to eat before their penitential fast is broken by communion, 'especially on the days of the *sacred fast*.' Canons 20 and 23 have already described two kinds of fast (besides the baptism fast) : (1) the Lent fast ; (2) the Holy-Week fast (called 'pascha'), which is here described as 'the sacred fast.' The meaning therefore is : 'Let none break the Lenten fast before he has communicated, especially on those more sacred fast days which occur immediately before Easter.'

[1] See p. 38. For these Canons see Prof. F. Schwartz, cited on p. 39, and R. H. Connolly, 'The So-called Egyptian Church Order,' *Texts and Studies*, VIII. 4, Cambridge, 1916

[2] In H. Achelis, *Texte und Untersuchungen*, VI. 4, XXVIII. § 205. Leipzig, 1891, p. 207, and Connolly, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

[3] J. Wordsworth, *The Ministry of Grace*, London, 1901, p. 320.

S. Isidore of Seville

c. A.D. 600

Isidore is quoted by Dr. Pusey as saying :--

> The disciples at first did not receive the body and blood of the Lord fasting. But now by the whole Church it is received fasting.[1]

This is printed as the thirteenth and last 'testimony' in *Fasting Reception*; but the author did not add that Isidore was merely carrying on the quotation from Augustine's Letter to Januarius, and that Isidore has told us elsewhere what he means by fasting :

> Fasting is frugality in nourishment and abstinence in food.[2]

He in fact meant no more than Augustine had meant when he approved of a light meal before communion.[3]

[1] The quotation is from Isidore, *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*, I. cap. xviii., Migne, vol. LXXXIII. p. 753. E. B. Pusey, *The Real Presence*, XXV., Oxford, 1857. But Pusey said in 1879 : 'I think that the subject of fasting Communion is pressed very unduly upon people's consciences by some, so as to set an ancient custom of the Church against our Lord's command, in some cases.' *Spiritual Letters of E. B. Pusey*, p. 273, ed. J. O. Johnston and W. C. E. Newbolt.

[2] For the Latin text see p. 34. Bishop Amalarius (*c.* A.D. 800) also quoted the same extract. Amalarius, *Eccles. Off.* III, cap. XXXIV., Hittorpius, Paris, 1624, p. 434D. The citation from Peter Lombard is given on p. 98.

[3] Augustine is also quoted by or interpolated in Anastasius Siniata, who says that the Church accepts some traditions which are not in Scripture :—*quod genus ; sacram communionem a jejunis accipi debere* (Migne, vol. LXXXIX. p. 39). This is given as No. 12 in the 'evidences' of *Fasting Reception*, where it is dated A.D. 561, and quoted as 'One ought to be fasting when he receives the Holy Eucharist.' But the *Dictionary of Christian Biography* says that the *Guide to the True Way*, from which this sentence is taken, is by another Anastasius of Mount Sinai, a monk who lived late in the seventh century, and that it probably contains interpolations.

CHAPTER XIII

LATER LOCAL COUNCILS, ETC.

Priscillianism

6th and 7th Centuries

THE absence of any œcumenical reference to fasting-communion is one of those signs which corroborate the fact that the idea had not come above the horizon in the period of the General Councils. We have to turn to small local councils and to wait nearly two centuries after Augustine before we find any further reference to the subject. And here, too, the evidence carries us no further. Those five councils, which have been so often instanced, only refer to the celebrating priest, and seem only to mean that he is not to celebrate after dinner.

To us they can have little but historical interest. We can hardly wish to regulate our lives according to the model of the barbarians who had then conquered Gaul and Spain.

1. *The First Council of Braga*, A.D. 563, was dealing with the Priscillianist sectaries, who fasted on Christmas Day and Sunday because they did not believe in the incarnation or the resurrection of the body, and, among other things, when they went to communion did not at once consume the Sacrament, but took it home with them. Their tenets are obscure, but they seem to have rejected communion in both kinds (a rejection which was then condemned by the Roman Church [1]), and

[1] *E.g.* by Pope Leo I., *Serm.* XLII. 5, Migne, vol. LIV. p. 280.

apparently received in one kind at home. The council therefore, because some priests were following Priscillianist ways, forbade reservation, and also forbade the queer practice of breaking the Maundy fast by having a mass for the dead at about 9 a.m. :—

> If any one, on the fourth day in Holy Week which is called the Supper of the Lord, does not have mass at the lawful hour, after 3 p.m. in church, fasting, but like the sect of Priscillian celebrates the festival of that day after 9 a.m. by mass for the dead after he has broken his fast, let him be anathema.[1]

If any one to-day, therefore, is afraid of this anathema, let him keep the Lent fast by not having a solid meal till after an afternoon Communion on Maundy Thursday.

2. *The Second Council of Braga*, A.D. 572, condemns in stronger language those 'priests, corrupted by the folly of a lately adopted error,' the 'foulness of the now old Priscillian heresy,' because of

> this presumption that in mass for the dead, even after they have taken unmixed wine, they have been bold to consecrate the oblation; on this account this should be observed by the admonition of the prefixed manifest sentence, that if any priest after this our edict be any more discovered in this madness, that is, that not fasting but after any food whatever he have consecrated the oblation of the altar, he be at once deprived of his office and be deposed by his own bishop.[2]

Here the dozen bishops who met at Braga forbid their

[1] Canon 16, in Bruns, *Canones*, II. p. 32. These canons are given in the original Latin in Kingdon's *Fasting Communion*, II. cap. i.

[2] Bruns, *Canones*, II. p. 42; Kingdon, p. 70. The canon is included among the 'evidences' in *Fasting Reception*, but the quotation in that book only begins at 'If any priest after this our edict,' and thus reads as if it were a strong general enforcement of fasting-communion.

priests to celebrate masses for the dead after food, like the Priscillianists. For some reason, not known to us but perhaps connected with their disbelief in the resurrection of the body, the Priscillianists seem to have held a 'wake' before masses for the dead; and some priests celebrated after they had 'taken unmixed wine.' What taking unmixed wine meant at that day we can imagine from contemporary evidence. St. Gregory of Tours gives us an idea of the times. He tells us of a priest who kept his vigil by sitting up drinking all night, and yet was chosen next day as celebrant because of his senatorial rank, and then fell down in a fit after communicating. He tells also of a bishop who was murdered in church on Easter morning; of another who was poisoned as he rose for the vigil of Christmas Eve. He also tells us of another bishop, giving a feast on his birthday, who was set upon by two brother-bishops and their men, who tore his clothes, killed his servants, and carried off all the feast. These two bishops (who wore armour and went to war) were deposed at Lyons; but the Pope, on appeal, ordered their immediate restoration, and restored they were.[1]

Frankish Drunkenness

3. *Council of Auxerre*, A.D. 578. These genial habits of the Merovingian era account for the next two councils that are quoted in the *catena* of 'evidences' for fasting-communion. Since even priests could not be trusted to dine without getting drunk, the Council of Auxerre found it necessary to forbid them from even staying in church

[1] *De Gloriâ Martyrum*, I. 87: *Historia Francorum*, VIII. 31, III. 17, V. 20.

during service after food and drink, and very rightly decreed :—

> It is not lawful for priest, deacon, or subdeacon, after he has taken food or drink, to handle the mass, nor to stay in church while it is being said.[1]

The astonishing thing is that the Frankish bishops had not done anything before, and that so very few local councils tried to put down such abuses.

4. *The Council of Mâcon* (A.D. 585) illustrates this negligence further by having to refer for precedent as far back as the African Council of Hippo : indeed, it quotes the relevant passage from Hippo about fasting men and the Maundy meal,[2] in order to prevent a priest celebrating when fuddled, '*confertus cibo aut crapulatus vino*' :—[3]

> Also we decree that no priest gorged with food or drunken with wine presume to handle the sacrifices or to celebrate mass on private or festal days, for it is not fitting that bodily food should be placed before spiritual ; but if any have of set purpose attempted this, let him lose his rank of honour.

Although this decree is dealing with a particular evil, it is noticeable how easily a point is pushed a little further by the desire to make language as strong as possible. To say that bodily food ought not to be placed before spiritual enforces the order ; but it would be easy as time went on to interpret it as meaning not order of importance, but a strict order of sequence, though I do not know that this was actually done till the seventeenth century.

5. This little company of canons has been marched

[1] Canon 19, in Bruns, *Canones*, II. p. 239.

[2] See p. 68.

[3] *Fasting Reception* (p. 19) translates this, 'forbids priests to celebrate Mass after they have eat and drunk' !

so often across the stage that we must give an account of each one. The next, like the first two, is characteristically Visigothic.

Council of Toledo, A.D. 646. This canon deals with the accidents which were then common at mass owing to the curious tendency of the celebrant to faint. It therefore orders that no bishop or priest is to consecrate without another priest at hand to go on with the service if he faints. Was 'fainting' a euphemism? The canon proceeds:—

> Lest, however, that which is recommended by reason of the weakness of our nature should be turned into the bane of presumption, let no man presume to offer mass after taking any least portion of food or drink; let no minister or priest leave the service unfinished when he has begun it, without patent symptoms of uneasiness. If any presume upon this rashly, let him incur the sentence of excommunication.[1]

Although the laity had not as yet been included, it is clear that the Council forbade bishops or priests to celebrate after a meal, and pushed this further to forbid them to take any food or drink before celebrating. Spain has moved a step forward in the process that was so long in developing. It has also tried, though without ultimate success, to forbid mass without a second celebrant in reserve.

Abolition of the Maundy Custom

6. The last of these canons is from the *Council of Trullo*, A.D. 692, and takes us to Constantinople.[2] I quote it here because it appears in the list of 'evidences'; but

[1] Bruns, *Canones*, I. pp. 262-3.

[2] The Pope of Rome refused to accept the canons of this Trullan (or Quinisext) Council, and they were never recognised as of force in the West.

it has nothing to do with fasting-communion. It merely abolishes the relaxation of Lent on Maundy Thursday which the Council of Hippo, three centuries before, had retained, and thus enforces the Lenten fast without any exception :—

> The canon of the fathers at Carthage declares that the things of the holy altar are not to be celebrated except by fasting men, with the exception of one annual day when the Lord's Supper is celebrated, when perhaps those holy fathers used such a policy at that particular time for certain local reasons profitable to the Church. Since, however, there is nothing urging us to forsake our stringency, we, following the traditions of the Apostles and Fathers, determine that men ought not to relax the Thursday in the last week of Lent and dishonour the whole Lent.[1]

Curiously enough, the same Trullan Council issued another canon [2] which allowed the Easter Eve fast to cease at midnight, and thus enabled people to feast in the small hours of Easter morning. They may be supposed to have communicated on Easter Even, or perhaps on Good Friday; but nothing is said about this; nor is there a Celebration at midnight to break the fast, nor is there anything forbidding them to communicate on Easter Day.

Anglo-Saxon Habits

Archbishop Theodore, c. 680

One of the earliest documents which seem to forbid food before communion to the laity is the *Poenitentiale*

[1] Canon 29, Bruns, *Canones*, I. p. 46. *Fasting Reception* (p. 19) quotes this so as to be unintelligible, but italicises the sentence about the traditions of the Apostles. The unwary reader would thus think that the Council referred to fasting-communion as a tradition of the Apostles. Their reference really was to the so-called 'Canons of the Apostles,' and to the fourth-century Council of Laodicea, which had also condemned the breaking of Lent on Maundy Thursday.

[2] Canon 89, Bruns, *Canones*, I. p. 61.

of Archbishop Theodore, which was compiled, with his sanction, by one of his Northumbrian scholars, from answers which he had given on points of discipline. Such answers, owing their value to the personal weight of the author, ' were specially needful when the Church was in conflict with the gross vices of heathenism; they deal for the most part with revolting subjects.' [1] This of Theodore is doubtless directed against ' crapulous reception,' and its object is to prevent communion immediately after a meal; but the scribe, after dealing with matters unspeakable, cites it briefly and without explanation :—

> He who shall receive the sacrifice after food, let him fast seven days.[2]

This was transcribed by Archbishop Ecgbert in the so-called Confessional of *c.* A.D. 760. Food was not taken in those days without strong drink, and even bishops were known to indulge in excess. Ecclesiastical persons were therefore forbidden to drink before 9 a.m. ' Food ' must have meant much the same as the *prandium* meant to Augustine; for ' nine in the morning was probably the time of the principal meal of the day. Excessive drinking was a national habit.' [3]

Tenth-Century Laws

Little further effort at enforcing abstemiousness seems to have been made till towards the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, if the following canons are to be

[1] W. Hunt, *The English Church from its Foundation to the Norman Conquest*, London, 1907, p. 160.

[2] Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils*, Oxford, 1881, vol. III. p. 187. There follows a passage saying that confession is only to be made when necessary.

[3] Hunt, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

dated between 960 and 990. The first is for the laity, and refers to a preliminary period of penitence, including fasting, almsgiving, and (later on) confession. It will be seemly to quote the original Latin :—

> Et antea tam jejuniis quam eleemosynis seipsos purificent, et abstineant a conjugali opere et a quibuscunque vitiis, ac se tam precibus quam eleemosynis et quibuscunque bonis operibus praeparent.[1]

The next, No. 45, which was abominably translated by John Johnson [2] in the once current version : –

> Further we command all priests, who wish to celebrate mass on Sundays or other feasts before the high mass, that they do this privately, so that they may draw away no part of the people from the public mass : for it is a very bad custom which many men practise, both on Sundays and other feasts, that they will celebrate[3] mass early in the morning, and immediately after mass, from the early morning through the whole day, in drunkenness and junketing will serve their belly and not God.
>
> Therefore we command that no man taste any food before the service of the public mass is finished ; and that all, women as well as men, assemble themselves at the great mass and to the holy and spiritual church, and there hear the great mass and the preaching of God's word.

The writers who tried, with considerable success, in the last half of the nineteenth century to fasten the idea

[1] D. Wilkins, *Leges Anglo-Saxonicae Ecclesiasticae et Civiles*, p. 194, Nos. 44, 45, Londini, 1721.

[2] *A Collection of the Laws and Canons of the Church of England*, I. p. 478 (Library of Catholic Theology), Oxford, 1850. He begins : 'We command all priests who are willing to sing Mass before the High Mass either on Sundays or other Mass days, that they do it secretly.'

[3] Johnson, *op. cit.*, alters the meaning of this by translating *missam celebrare*, 'hear mass,' thereby passing the charge of drunkenness on to the laity.

of fasting-communion upon the Church were obsessed with the entirely mistaken idea that ancient canons were binding on Churchmen ; and *Fasting Reception* devotes a special section to Anglo-Saxon canons, eked out by such evidence as that S. Hilda and Caedmon received the communion in the small hours of the morning—when they were dying. Since writers like Bishop Collins explained the nature of canon-law,[1] we have heard little of such arguments. But it was wise of *Fasting Reception* not to quote the above extract, since—

1. It discourages lay attendance at early Celebrations.
2. It orders the laity not to eat food before hearing mass—there is no suggestion of their communicating.
3. It forbids them also to listen to sermons after food.

Certainly the authors of the law did not mean that no one was to hear sermons unless he had fasted from the previous midnight—the fasting-reception of sermons—but quite simply that people were to have their drunken dinner after hearing mass, and not before it. At least they should behave decently in church. And this is what all the councils and canons were trying to secure.

[1] W. E. Collins, *The Nature and Force of the Canon Law*, London (S.P.C.K.), 1898 ; also *The Authority of General Councils* (Church Historical Society tract). Of course, no General Councils touch the question of fasting-communion at all.

CHAPTER XIV

BEFORE THE TRANSITION

THE evidence given by the rules for the ablutions (*i.e.* the careful washing of the sacred vessels at the end of the Liturgy), to be mentioned below, would lead us to expect that after the eleventh century the rule of fasting-communion would spread from the celebrant to the laity, especially as the latter now communicate only once a year. To measure the change let us go back to the ninth century.

Walafrid Strabo

A.D. 850

We find Strabo still writing in the old style: little seems to have changed since Augustine in A.D. 400: some still communicate after dinner; and to Strabo fasting still means—not after this drunken *prandium*:—

> Also a great reason of necessity demands this [fasting], since evidently it is credible that men taking the *prandium* before communion (a bad habit, always tending to become worse) would sometimes slip on from slight refections even to excess of drunkenness.[1]

The only difference is that, unlike Augustine, he is afraid to trust to the temperance even of a refection.

A Frankish capitulary of the ninth century gives an

[1] *De Rebus Ecclesiasticis*, cap. XIX., Hittorpius, *De Divinis Officiis*, Parisiis, 1624, p. 677.

interesting example of an attempt to secure fasting after communion :—

> That communicants be taught to wait two or three hours, because of the admixture of food.[1]

S. Chrysostom in the beginning of the fifth century had suggested this practice 'because after communion, drunkenness follows.'[2] This, and fasting before Baptism, have not, however, held their own, though the latter has more ancient precedent in its favour than fasting-communion. It will be noticed that the Frankish capitulary gives a materialistic reason, though not without logic ; for if breakfast before communion is a physical 'admixture,' so is breakfast after.

Other laws of this period show how much the fear of drunkenness was involved.[3]

The same fear of drunkenness appears in a local decree at Seligenstadt, which is quoted by Puller[4] as showing evidence of fasting-communion before Aquinas. It might well do so, since, as we have seen, there is evidence of it in the case of the celebrant as early as the eleventh century : but all it really shows is that a precaution was taken to prevent priests who were to celebrate, *e.g.* on Sunday, from spending the Saturday in drunkenness :—

COUNCIL AT SELIGENSTADT

A.D. 1022

> A priest who has drunk after cockcrow shall not celebrate next day, unless necessity should compel.

[1] 'Ut doceantur communicantes duabus vel tribus suspendere horis, propter admixtionem cibi.' *Capitularia Regum Francorum*, tom. I. col. 1213, ed. Stephanus Baluzius, Parisiis, 1677.

[2] *In Epist. I. ad Cor.*, Hom. XXVII. [3] See p. 35.

[4] F. W. Puller, *Concerning the Fast before Communion*, p. 35, London, 1903. He also mentions Boniface (A.D. 745) forbidding strong drink on Easter Eve and Christmas Eve, but this was because they were vigils, and has nothing to do with communion.

CHAPTER XV

THE BEGINNING OF FASTING-COMMUNION

Evidence of the Ablutions

11th to 13th Century

WHEN then did the custom of fasting-communion definitely establish itself? It began partially and locally, at first for the celebrant only; and it became general during the Middle Ages, though it was not established as a strict 'no-breakfast' rule till 1270. There is, however, one definite way in which we can trace it as a rule for the celebrant—by studying the manner in which the ablutions were taken after the communion; for as soon as we find a rule appearing that the celebrant is not to consume the ablutions when he has to say a second mass, then we know that the idea of fasting-communion is there established. To take the ablutions would be to break his fast; for the idea that communion itself breaks any fast has died out.

As so often happens, the process of materialising begins with a forgery—the Synodical Admonition of the Pseudo-Leo, 'plainly not unconnected with the letter of the Pseudo-Clement,'[1] in the ninth century; but although the idea here appears that it is exceedingly important

[1] W. Lockton, *The Treatment of the Remains at the Eucharist*, Cambridge University Press, 1920, p. 119. The Pseudo-Clement, a seventh-century forger, had the audacity to compose a letter which he pretended was written by S. Clement of Rome to S. James, the brother of our Lord.

for no trace of the consecrated elements to remain, the consumption of the ablutions has not begun. In earlier times the consecrated elements were regarded mainly as the vehicle of a spiritual gift; there was much care in the act of communion, but the *traces* that were left did not exercise people's imagination. This is still the case in the eighth-century *Ordo Romanus I.*: there are many breakings of the consecrated rolls of bread, which are carried about the church in little bags, and many pourings of the consecrated wine; but no precautions are taken, and there are no ablutions.[1] We find, however, the presence of traces and tiny remains [2] exercising the mind of the forger Pseudo-Clement, whom we have mentioned above. The second stage begins with the Pseudo-Leo in the ninth century: care is now taken, but the ablutions are poured away: [3] a piscina in the floor was used for this, for wall piscinas do not appear in England or France till near the transition to Gothic architecture about the middle of the twelfth century. The third stage comes in the eleventh century: the priest [4] drinks the ablutions himself, though they are still poured away in the Carthusian Statutes of *c.* 1230.[5]

[1] *Ordo Romanus Primus*, ed. E. G. Cuthbert F. Atchley, London, Moring, 1905, pp. 112, 141. Tertullian was meticulous about '*aliquid* calicis aut panis' (*De Corona*, III.); probably something substantial is meant, and not mere traces. In the so-called *Canons of Hippolytus* of the fourth to sixth century the communicant is told not to drop anything lest an evil spirit get possession of it (XXVIII. 206-9), or 'lick it up' in the *Egyptian Church Order*, Connolly, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

[2] 'Dust,' *pulvis*: see Lockton, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

[3] Lockton, *op. cit.*, p. 119. In *Ordo Romanus III.* there are still no ablutions; in *Ordo Romanus XIV.* the second ablutions are still poured away. A. Fortescue, *The Mass*, London, Longmans, 1912, p. 384.

[4] The deacon, at Rouen in 1065. *De Off. Eccles.*, Migne, CXLVII. col. 37.

[5] Lockton, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

And now we come to definite proof that the idea of fasting-communion is an established matter, at least for the celebrant. We may therefore assume that the principle was accepted in some places by the middle of the eleventh century, if not earlier, though its application was not yet defined.

Peter Damiani, the vehement ascetic and advocate of flogging (†1072), wrote to a priest as follows :—

> With regard to the celebration of the solemnities of masses, we have both learned and hold this rule according to the custom in well-ordered churches, that we put off pouring into the chalice at the end of mass if we hope ourselves to offer the sacrifice again the same day.[1]

The remark about ' well-ordered ' churches suggests that this is a new departure adopted by some in Rome who took pride in being correct.

In 1212 the principle is more firmly established : a priest cannot celebrate again if he has taken the ablutions. This is from a letter by *Pope Innocent III.* to the Bishop of Maguelonne, *c.* 1212 :—

> The priest ought always to besprinkle with wine after he has received the whole sacrament of the eucharist, except when on the same day he has to celebrate another mass, lest if by chance he received the wine of ablution he should be hindered from another celebration.[2]

The same principle appears in England at the council at *Durham* [3] in 1220, and that at *Oxford* [4] in 1222, and is

[1] *Epis.*, lib. v. cap. xviii., Migne, CXLIV. col. 370. Damiani was a Cardinal and Bishop of Ostia. No doubt the misunderstood passage from Augustine had contributed to the growth of this scruple. We have noted on p. 83 its quotation by Isidore and Amalarius.

[2] Migne, vol. CXXV. p. 442. Quoted by Lockton (*op. cit.*, p. 130), by whom the whole subject of the ablutions has been most carefully worked out.

[3] Wilkins, *Concilia Mag. Brit.*, I. p. 579, London, 1737.

[4] Wilkins, *op. cit.*, I. p. 594.

established in some of the Sarum books[1] of the next century, though with nothing stronger than 'ought not.'

We may, then, be certain that the principle of fasting-communion, at least for the priest, was recognised in some places in the eleventh century, and was being made more definite during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The Transition

Peter Lombard, c. A.D. 1160

Meanwhile the isolated fragment from Augustine continued to do duty,[2] though it was not yet completely misunderstood. Indeed, Peter Lombard, who collected and arranged 'Sentences' from Augustine, Anselm, his own master Abélard, and others, is still in the transitional stage when he writes :—

> But [the Lord] did not because of that ordain for the future that it should be received after other food, but rather that it ought to be received by fasting men, as the Apostle [*sic*] teaches, that it should be distinguished by peculiar reverence—that is, separated [*discernatur*] from other food, which the Lord left for his Apostles to set in order.[3]

This might still bear Augustine's meaning that it ought to be received before dinner instead of after ; but it probably meant more, because *a jejunis* had by the twelfth century acquired a more definite meaning in connection with communion.

[1] *E.g.* the MS. Customary, quoted by Lockton, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

[2] *Cf.* Isidore, on p. 83.

[3] Peter Lombard, *Sententiarum*, lib. IV., dist. VIII. Migne, vol. CXCII. p. 857. But he does not understand S. Paul in 1 Cor. 11^{29}. *Cf.* p. 19.

Gratian
1148-1150

About the year 1150 Gratian produced his masterly codification of Canon Law, known as the *Decretum*. In the *Decretum* are given a short extract from Augustine's letter to Januarius without comment,[1] and a quotation of the Carthage Canon.[2] The accepted commentary, or *Glossa Ordinaria*, on the *Decretum* was that of Joannes Teutonicus (*c.* 1210), revised and completed by Bartholomew of Brescia (*c.* 1250). Doubtless the quotation in the original Gratian would be taken at that time as inculcating a form of fasting-communion. But what did fasting-communion mean in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries?

The Gratian Commentary of *c.* 1250
(*After Digestion*)

We have the remarkable evidence of the thirteenth-century *Decretum*, containing the gloss, probably of Bartholomew of Brescia, that it meant, even as late as this, 'when digestion is completed,' which is not much more than Augustine meant when he said that communion should be not after but before the *prandium*.

> But when shall a man be called *fasting*? Suppose that I eat to-day, and sleep not by day nor night, am I fasting at the beginning of another day? Some say that

[1] Gratian, *Decretum*, pars III. *De Consecratione*, dist. II. cap. liv. p. 1333, E. L. Richter and E. Friedberg, Leipzig, 1879. The section in Gratian is headed, *Item Augustinus in libro responsionum ad Januarium*, and is a careful quotation (reading *exteri* for *ceteri*) of the passage beginning 'Liquido apparet quando primo' down to 'diversitate variatur,' which is his reading of 'quod eum morem nemo variasset.' For this passage, see Appendix, pp. 121-3.

[2] *Op. cit.*, III., dist. I. cap. xlix.

I am. Otherwise sleep would be said to break the fast, which I do not believe. But I say that the fast exists when digestion is complete.[1]

Here, then, in the very middle of the thirteenth century, the interpretation still excludes fasting-communion, unless our grandfathers who 'stayed behind' after Morning Prayer and communicated at noon (and those to-day who do the same) are fasting, for midday communion after breakfast fulfils the requirements of the thirteenth-century *Decretum*. A person who has finished breakfast at nine has completed his digestion before noon, and is therefore fasting not only in the Augustinian senses but in the mediæval sense, before Aquinas came in.

[1] Gloss upon the *Decretum*, pars III., *De Consecratione*, dist. I., cap. xlix. col. 1902, Lugduni, 1571, p. 541.

CHAPTER XVI

THE RULE ESTABLISHED

S. Thomas Aquinas

A.D. 1270

IT was S. Thomas Aquinas who gave to the older custom the new meaning which it has since borne in the Roman Catholic Church; and it is significant that one of his three reasons is the danger of vomiting and drunkenness, from which we learn that the old disgusting table-manners continued. The second reason which he gives is the curious confounding of spiritual and material things which argues that, because Christ ought to come first into our hearts, therefore no food ought to come into our stomachs. The first reason is the misquotation from Augustine: it is curious that Aquinas was content to take over the quotation from Gratian without verifying it from Augustine's letter and studying the context. If he had read it, he could not, being the man he was, have written as he did. That he did not consult the original is shown by the fact that, though he quotes from the letter four times,[1] he never goes beyond the short extract in Gratian:—

Sed contra est, quod Augustinus dicit in lib. Responsionum ad Januarium (*epist.* 118, *cap.* 6, *ant. med.*): 'Placuit Spiritui Sancto, ut in honorem tanti sacramenti

[1] Besides the quotation given here, he only quotes a little further on (p. 239 in the Rome edition, 1906) these two short passages, 'Neque quia post cibum . . . servaret hoc locum,' and 'per universum orbem mos iste servatur,' both of which are in Gratian (see

prius in os Christiani Dominicum corpus intraret, quam caeteri cibi.'

Respondeo . . . *Primo* quidem, sicut August. dicit (*loc. cit.*) 'in honorem hujus sacramenti,' ut scilicet in os hominis intret nondum aliquo cibo, vel potu infectum: *Secundo*, propter significationem, ut scilicet detur intelligi quod Christus, qui est res hujus sacramenti, et caritas ejus, debet primo fundari in cordibus nostris, secundum illud Matth. 6: *primum quaerite Regnum Dei*: *Tertio*, propter periculum vomitus, et ebrietatis, quae quandoque contingunt ex hoc quod homines inordinate cibis utuntur sicut et Apostolus dicit 1 Cor. xi.: *Alius quidem esurit, alius vero ebrius est.* Ab hac tamen generali regula excipiuntur infirmi, qui statim communicandi sunt, etiam post cibum, si de eorum periculo dubitetur, ne sine communione decedant, quia necessitas legem non habet.[1]

So Aquinas, having taken a fragment of Augustine's letter at second-hand without consulting the original, changed the old custom; and that which was still allowed in 1250, communion some three hours after food, was forbidden by him in 1270, and forbidden so rigidly that only one in danger of death was allowed to follow the example of Christ and his Apostles, and so meticulously that no one, as he says later on, 'neither after taking water, or other food or drink, or even medicine, in however small a quantity, may receive this sacrament.'[2]

A rigid law has been made for the first time; and the floodgates of punctilious superstition, which had been slowly opening since the eleventh century, are flung

Appendix, pp. 121-3). This is also shown by the fact that Aquinas thinks that Augustine had abrogated the Communion after the Maundy Supper, whereas the object of the whole letter to Januarius is to show that it is not abrogated.

[1] S. Thomas, *Summa*, pars III., q. LXXX., art. VIII., p. 239, Romae, 1906.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 239.

wide at the end of the thirteenth. But there was one point still unsettled, and S. Thomas' methodical intellect did not pass it over. When did this communion-fast begin? It began, he said, with the day. But when did the day begin? Some said at sunset; some, at midnight; and some, at dawn. S. Thomas turned to the local Church at Rome for the solution, and wrote :—

> Ecclesia tamen secundum romanos diem a media nocte incipit. Et ideo si post mediam noctem aliquis sumpserit aliquid per modum cibi, vel potus, non potest eadem die hoc sumere sacramentum.[1]

Later Roman Catholic Action

There was nothing much left to be done after this. The Council of Constance [2] in 1415 forbade the chalice to the laity (who were in the habit of only communicating once a year) and enforced fasting-communion except *in casu infirmitatis*. Since then, the Roman Catholic Church has been concerned in mitigating the impracticability of the law by a large number of dispensations, some of which are disgusting,[3] some reasonable,[4] some rather unprincipled,[5] and all savouring of Pharisaism. The curious can discover how much more numerous these dispensations are than is generally known, by consulting Wickham Legg's learned tract on the subject.

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 239.

[2] It is seriously quoted among the 'evidences' in *Fasting Reception*.

[3] J. Wickham Legg, *Papal Faculties allowing Food before Communion*, London, 1905, pp. 7-8.

[4] *E.g.* to priests having to say a second mass at another church some distance off, in Europe; or to priests in the tropics at any time. *Op. cit.*, pp. 26, 71, 75, 86.

[5] *E.g.* to the Emperor Charles v., Louis xv., the Queen of Bohemia, and the Old Pretender, *op. cit.*, 24, 25, 35, etc.

In dealing with the sick the Vatican is less generous than the Council of Constance ; but it allows the patient in serious or chronic cases to take before communion food *per modum potus,* ' soup, coffee, or any other liquid food, with which there have been mixed such bodies as for example oatmeal or grated bread and the like, provided that the mixture does not lose the nature of liquid food.' [1] The priests who once tithed their mint and anise and cummin have their successors in these modern ecclesiastics endeavouring to mitigate some of the evils of a vicious principle.

In extenuation, however, of Aquinas, who brought about this unfortunate position, it should be remembered that, like his successors in the seventeenth century, he accepted the forgeries without suspicion, including the Pseudo-Clement.[2]

It should also be remembered, in explanation of the ancient insistence on fasting in general, that scientific psychology was unknown. It was not understood that complete fasting (as distinguished from temperance and abstemiousness) weakens the normal control by the higher centres of the brain, so that the lower centres tend to get free play ; mere impulse is thus less held in check by conscious purpose, and the flitting images of the mind are less corrected by ordered conceptual thought. Self-sacrifice is good, but the loss of general sanity of judgment is bad. In this also the teaching of Christ is vindicated to-day.

[1] See the specimen faculty of the Inquisition under Leo XIII., 1897, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-4.

[2] Aquinas, *Summa*, pars III. q. LXXX. art. VIII., p. 240.

CHAPTER XVII

AFTER THE REFORMATION IN ENGLAND

The Prayer Book and Canons

THE curiously furtive custom of fasting-communion had made hardly any impression upon canon law by the time of the Reformation. Indeed, what strikes the enquirer at once is the difficulty of finding any reference to the subject. In the whole body of the *Decretum*, the Decretals, and the Extravagants there is nothing except the one extract which Gratian made, as we have seen, in the twelfth century from Hippo and the letter to Januarius.[1] If the enquirer takes a summary of the canons, such as that of Carranza,[2] and looks in the index, the only reference he will find is one to the forged canon of Soter.[3] If he turns to the English fifteenth-century canonist Lyndwood, he will find nothing that forbids lay communion after food. The Reformers of the sixteenth century, indeed, had nothing before them except the fifteenth-century Council of Constance (which they had every reason to detest, since it had forbidden the chalice to the laity and treacherously burnt John Huss and Jerome of Prague), and the rubrics in the later missals which forbade the priest to take the ablutions when he was to celebrate a second time. The missals were abolished, and no reference to fasting-communion has ever appeared in an English service-book or canon.

This is the more significant because some preparatory

[1] See p. 99. [2] See p. 38, n. 1. [3] See p. 38.

fasting is recommended in the Prayer Book for adults who are preparing for baptism : ' and that they may be exhorted to prepare themselves with Prayers and Fasting for the receiving of this holy Sacrament,' says the first rubric of The Ministration of Baptism to such as are of Riper Years. Many penitential fasting days were also appointed in the Prayer Book, with the important and very sensible qualification that abstinence is treated as the same thing as fasting, or as an alternative to it—' Days of Fasting or Abstinence.' In the New Book of 1927 the number of such days is reduced ; and whereas, under the Book of 1662, fasting days had to be announced (according to a rubric in the Communion Service [1]) every Sunday, they need under the New Book be only announced on Quinquagesima and Palm Sundays, *i.e.* before those ' greater Fasts and Days of Abstinence ' which are now alone classed among the Holy-days ' to be observed.' The Church of England thus does not go beyond the excellent principle that occasional abstinence of some kind or other is good for men.

The matter is clinched by the Church Catechism, which states clearly that members of the Church are to be taught that there are three requisites before communion, and these spiritual :—

> *Question.*—What is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper?
>
> *Answer.*—To examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a new life ; have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death ; and be in charity with all men.

[1] ' Then the Curate shall declare unto the people what Holy-days, or Fasting-days, are in the Week following to be observed.' *First Rubric after the Nicene Creed.*

Among the Homilies of the Church of England there is a Homily 'Of Fasting,' but it contains no reference to fasting-communion.

Convocation

The principle has been officially reasserted in recent years. Following on the solemn warnings about materialism by Archbishop Benson in his Primary Charge of 1885, the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury adopted a Report in 1893, of which the seventh clause stated :—

> That at the Reformation the Church of England, in accordance with the principle of liberty laid down in Article XXXIV., ceased to require the Communion to be received fasting, though the practice was observed by many as a reverent and ancient custom, and as such is commended by several of her eminent writers and divines down to the present time.[1]

And in 1899 the Upper House of the Convocation of York adopted a Report, which concludes as follows :—

> Fasting Reception is one of those matters of Ecclesiastical Discipline which every 'particular or national church hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish' with a view to the spiritual health of its members. And that the English Church since the Reformation has ceased to require fasting before Holy Communion, leaving the matter to individual liberty, appears to be clear from the fact that there is no direction upon the subject in those passages of the Prayer Book in which the requisites of individual preparation are plainly specified, nor in any of our authoritative documents. If it be urged that there was no need to prescribe the observance in 1549, the same cannot be said of 1662. In other words, our Church has virtually applied to this

[1] *Report*, May 5th, 1893. The facts about the supposed antiquity of the custom were not then known.

matter the principle of St. Paul's teaching on a similar question: *Let not him that eateth set at nought him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth; for God hath received him. . . . Let each man be fully assured in his own mind* (Rom. 14 [3, 5]).[1]

Members of the English Church and of the whole Anglican Communion have been therefore left entirely free in the manner of the reception of the Holy Communion.

Post-Reformation Instances

It was not till the Restoration that people reverted to the Greek and Roman custom of having breakfast: in James I.'s time it was still the rule to have two (very heavy) meals a day—dinner at 11 and supper at 6—for a 'morning draught'[2] was not considered a meal. This is probably why allusions to fasting-communion are so extremely rare before the Restoration. Roger Hutchinson,[3] 1552, has been quoted as showing the prevalence of the custom; but this was in *Edward VI.'s reign*, only three years after the First Prayer Book; and although he says of fasting, 'as the custom now is,' he goes on to say, 'as he doth well which cometh fasting to the Lord's Table, so he doth not ill which, by occasion, cometh after he hath eaten and drunk,' because meat and drink do not defile, but sin and iniquity. And he concludes:—'There is no commandment in the Scriptures which restraineth those that have eaten from Communion. Paul reproacheth not the Corinthians for any such thing.'

The only *Elizabethan* instance which has been found is

[1] *Report*, May 4th, 1899.
[2] *E.g.* Samuel Pepys, *Diary*, 1659, Jan. 3, 4, 13, and Feb. 3.
[3] *Works*, Parker Society (1842), pp. 221-2.

that of the lawyer, Richard Cosin, who wrote that the Primitive Church had altered the time of the Sacrament 'to have it received as it is in the morning fasting.'[1] It was indeed certainly a morning service, then, and nothing was taken before the dinner at about 11, except a morning draught, as we know. That the matter was not considered of any importance is proved beyond a doubt by the great mass of Elizabethan visitation articles and injunctions which has been published in recent years.[2] There are seven volumes of these, and they deal with every detail of church life, including a great number of orders and inquiries about the Holy Communion and the conditions of fitness for it ;[3] but no allusion whatever to fasting-communion has been discovered.

For the *Jacobean era* I can find only two instances : (1) Dr. David Lindsay, afterwards Bishop of Brechin :[4] 'But if the day-light, and the Lord's day, a sacred place, such as a temple, and a reverend order, such as to receive before meate be more decent for the Sacrament . . . For this respect we come fasting, preferring our spirituall food to our naturall : (2) Daniel Featley,[5] a zealous Puritan, and chaplain to Archbishop Abbot, wrote in

[1] Quoted in *Hierurgia*, III. p. 97. This was attributed to Archbishop Whitgift in a defence of fasting-communion by the Rev. A. Lendrum (*Principles of the Reformation*, 1875, p. 245). It is from R. Cosin's *Answer to an Abstract*, 1584, p. 60.

[2] *The 'Interpretations' of the Bishops*, by W. M. Kennedy, 1908 ; *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Period of the Reformation*, vols. I. and III., ed. W. H. Frere, vol. II. by the same and W. M. Kennedy, 1910 ; *Elizabethan Episcopal Administration*, 3 vols., ed. W. M. Kennedy, 1924 : all published by the Alcuin Club.

[3] The detailed requisites and rules for the Communion occupy nearly five pages of the index to *Visitation Articles*.

[4] *The Reasons for a Pastor's Resolution*, London, 1619, p. 57. Qu. F. C. Eeles, *Reservation of the Holy Eucharist in the Scottish Church*, Aberdeen, 1899, p. 14.

[5] *Stricturae in Lyndomastigem*, London, 1638, Qu. *Hierurgia*, p. 97.

1638: 'The people have warning a weeke at least before to prepare themselves, and they receive always fasting before.' He is arguing against charges of 'excess,' and refers probably not to a fast some days before, but to communion being before dinner and not after. The fact that nothing else about fasting has been discovered in the great mass of Anglican writings suggests that it was not regarded as of importance.

After the Restoration.—In that excellent collection of high-church precedents, *Hierurgia Anglicana*,[1] the editor can find only twelve instances from the Reformation to the nineteenth century, and of these only four certain cases (which I am quoting) survive investigation. There were some other post-Restoration examples, of which most are given in the *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*.[2] These will now be examined.

The list in the *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities* seems to give nearly all that can be found: at least, Dr. Wickham Legg in his exhaustive and detailed *English Church Life from the Restoration to the Tractarian Movement* [3] (where he prints the passages) cannot add to it. Three of the instances turn out to be in favour of freedom not

[1] *Hierurgia Anglicana*, 2nd edition, part III. pp. 96-102, ed. Vernon Staley, London, 1904.

[2] *D.C.A.*, art. 'Communion':—Edward Lake, *Officium Eucharisticum*, p. 63, 1673 (this book was sanctioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury (G. Sheldon) in 1677, and reached a 30th ed. in 1753); H[enry] C[ornwallis], *Brief Directions*, p. 36, 2nd ed., London, 1693; W. Nicholls, *The Plain Man's Instructor in the Common Prayer*, p. 48, London, 1713; J. Johnson, *Unbloody Sacrifice*, II. p. 270, London, 1718; *The Pious Country Parishioner*, p. 182, 6th ed., London, 1732; *The New Week's Preparation*, II. p. 133, London, 1737-1789. Taylor and Lake must have had many followers, for in 1753 the Archbishop of Canterbury (T. Herring), wishing to discourage fasting, suggested ordering evening Communions, *A New Form of Common Prayer*, p. 21, London, 1753.

[3] London (Longmans), 1914, pp. 50-5.

to fast; and another, not on either list, is involved—*A Week's Preparation*—a high-church book, which contains no reference to fasting-communion.[1] The three following, from the *D.C.A.* list, recommend fasting-communion, though without forbidding the opposite:—(1) Edward Lake is the most important. He was Chaplain to the future Queens, Mary and Anne. 'Having thus finished your *Closet-Devotions*, you go forth to the *Church* or *Chappell fasting*, so that a Portion from God's Table may be the *first Morsel*'; (2) H. Cornwallis; (3) W. Nicholls. The three following, from the same list, leave the custom optional:—(1) J. Johnson, who says that fasting is probably a primitive custom, but does not press it unless the communicant finds that it exalts his devotion; (2) *The Pious Country Parishioner*, in 1732 and 1747, says, 'If your Constitution be weak, or any great Inconvenience come from your Fasting the Morning you receive, use your Pleasure; but if you are strong and healthy, 'tis best to abstain from Breakfast'; but in the thirteenth edition (1753, p. 187) the following is substituted:—'You need not expose yourself to the Danger of Sickness, or any other Inconveniency, by total Abstinence; but without being nice in such Matters, may take such a moderate Breakfast, as will keep your Spirits under the Length and Fervour of your Devotions';[2] (3) *The New Week's Preparation*[3] recommends fasting-communion 'if you find that my *fasting* makes you more *devout* and *serious*,' and also 'if it be *indifferent*'; but

[1] *A Week's Preparation* (47th and 48th editions), 1736 and 1739. *The New Week's Preparation* was a low church book written to supplant it.

[2] I find the same clause in an edition of 1836.

[3] Ed. 1737: the same words occur in the later editions, as late as 1795.

adds, 'I must disapprove of it, if there be any inconvenience in abstaining.' This Dr. Legg quotes; but he might have added the preamble about the custom being 'altogether corporal.' 'If it be necessary to salvation, I will [come fasting]; but if we consider the institution, nothing of that kind is necessary; for it was instituted after supper; nor has the Church made any rule about it.' To these, from the *D.C.A.* list (which also includes, of course, Taylor and Sparrow), may be added another: (4) Anthony Horneck,[1] who thought that fasting-communion had continued 'ever since the Apostles' Days,' and recommended it, but said, 'it is a Thing not absolutely Necessary, to receive the Lord's Supper Fasting.'

This is all that can be found on the subject. The great mass of religious literature after the Restoration, as before, ignores it.

The one important divine who definitely advocated fasting-communion, was Jeremy Taylor, and nothing has been found in the records and writings of the other famous High Churchmen.[2] It is surprising, considering the estimation in which S. Augustine was held, that there are not more. Both Taylor and Sparrow base themselves, like everybody else, upon the misreading of the extract from Augustine, and both accept the mistaken idea that S. Paul had instituted Fasting-communion:[3] it was a custom, Jeremy Taylor thought,

[1] *The Crucified Jesus*, London, 1686 (7th ed., 1727), vi. p. 90 (62).

[2] Bishop Anthony Sparrow is not important, being only known because his *Rationale upon the Book of Common Prayer* (1657) was republished as an early Tractarian manifesto by J. H. Newman in 1839.

[3] Augustine had originally spread the mistaken idea that S. Paul had changed the Eucharist from its position after supper; he had not, however, taught that no food ought to be received before Communion, but the opposite. See pp. 123, 124.

which in most places from the very days of the Apostles prevailed.

Though he added that

sick people and the weak are as readily to be excused in this thing, as the Apostles were by Christ.[1]

Taylor also said that the Churches were left free: it was 'not a duty commanded by God,' though to 'despise' it showed an 'evil mind,' 'unless it be necessary to eat.'[2]

The orthodox Waterland, in his standard *Doctrine of the Eucharist*, shows how strong was the influence of the idea, fastened on theologians by a chain of forgeries and misrepresentations, that fasting-communion was of primitive origin; and at the same time he illustrates how the sturdy commonsense of Anglicanism withstood the obsession none the less:—

The rule was early and almost universal; a rule of the Church, not a rule of Scripture, and so a matter of Christian liberty, rather than of strict command. . . . No one need be scrupulous concerning this matter; none should be censorious either way.[3]

Dr. Johnson, the most prominent high-churchman of the eighteenth century, communicated after breakfast as a matter of course.[4]

The Tractarians

There were some in the *nineteenth century*, before

[1] J. Taylor, *The Worthy Communicant*, 1660. VIII. pp. 536, 538.

[2] 'That the Lord's Supper is sacredly and with reverence to be received is taught us by the Apostles; but whether this reverence ought to be expressed by taking it *virgine saliva*, fasting or not fasting, the Apostles left the churches to their choice.' J. Taylor, *Ductor Dubitantium*, 1660, III. cap. IV., rule 12, § 7, *cf.* 15, § 1.

[3] Daniel Waterland, *Review of the Doctrine of the Eucharist*, 1737 (ed. of 1868, p. 368).

[4] *Prayers* . . . by Samuel Johnson, London, 1785, pp. 47, 171.

the Tractarian movement, who communicated fasting, though they were exceptions, and most churchmen did not consider the matter: early Celebrations were only held on great festivals as additional services and in town churches.[1] The Tractarians themselves communicated fasting,[2] laying as they did great stress upon the ancient Fathers, and knowing their teaching on the subject only through the mistaken views of later authors. But they showed a beautifully Christian spirit in their application of the custom to others, and lived long enough to be much distressed at the superficial legalism of some of their followers. Keble was content to say 'with a sad smile, "It is a good custom,"' when a discussion on the subject was reported to him,[3] and to write condemning 'the disparaging tone sometimes used in speaking of midday Communions, with small consideration, as it seems to me, for the aged and infirm, and others who cannot come early.'[4] Pusey also considered it a good custom, but laid down that, 'There is no irreverence in non-fasting Communion,' 'There is no binding law,' 'In some cases at least there

[1] J. D. Johnston and W. C. E. Newbolt, *Spiritual Letters of Edward Bouverie Pusey*, London, 1898, III., XXXVI. (1879).

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] H. T. Kingdon, *Fasting Communion*, London, 1875, p. 347. On p. 349 he quotes Dr. Neale, who considered it only binding on nuns. Dr. Bright, who, as we have seen, had done much to spread the custom twenty years before, also came to deplore the sequel. In 1895 he says:—'I hate to hear fasting Communion urged as a matter of obligatory law, and that, perhaps, on the ground of mediæval canons, which our formularies do not allude to. . . . It is lamentable to see the substitution of the "letter," or mere command, for the "Spirit," and the result will be, in too many cases, sheer revolt from a Church system which is thus misrepresented as a law in the Judaic sense.' *Selected Letters of William Bright*, ed. B. J. Kidd, London, 1903, pp. 129-30.

[4] J. Keble, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel and Guidance*, Oxford, 1870, p. 239.

would be a direct conflict between our Lord's command and the observance of the pious custom. . . . I feel sure that if he were here, he would dispense with the custom in many cases'; and he added of those who even in 1879 were enjoining the custom under penalty of mortal sin, 'This is bewildering to me, and would, I should think, confuse in people's minds the thought of sin altogether.'[1]

It is indeed bewildering, and far more bewildering now than it was fifty years ago. There is a story of two Russians travelling by rail for the first time: they were sitting opposite each other in the new train, and one of them said to the other, 'What a wonderful invention this is! Here are you and I sitting in the same carriage, and yet one of us is going to Petersburg and the other to Moscow.'

The Tractarians held to a static view of the Church in an age that was moving swiftly to that dynamic conception which alone is possible to us now. Perhaps that is why they have been left so far behind even by their own spiritual descendants. All must move; and all, whether they realise it or not, are moving in the same direction.

And what is that direction? We may dwell together in the Church and fancy that we are speeding to opposite goals; but truth will have its way with us, and those to whom some of the disclosures in this little book may be unpalatable will move none the less towards the truth, because truth is of God. *Christus veritatem se. non consuetudinem cognominavit.*[2]

[1] E. B. Pusey, *ibid.* See also p. 83 above.
[2] Tertullian, *De Virginibus Velandis*, 1.

APPENDIX

AUGUSTINE'S LETTER TO JANUARIUS

Text and Translation

The Letter opens with a preamble which we need do no more than paraphrase here. Augustine begins by saying that he would have liked to know Januarius' own answer to the questions he puts. Customs, he says, may be due to Scripture, apostolic tradition, or plenary councils: outside this they vary in different places, and the best rule is to observe the custom of the place where one is. Augustine's mother had been troubled because they did not fast on Saturdays in Milan, but S. Ambrose had told Augustine, 'When I am in Rome, I fast on Saturday; but when I am here, I do not.' But some people are contentious and crotchety, some through only liking what they find at home and some through thinking that wisdom is increased the further they go abroad. He gives as an example a dispute about daily communion, and quotes 1 Cor. 11 in favour of reverence for the Sacrament and therefore against contention about it. He then proceeds:—

I. General Statement of the Question [1]

Travellers pick up Novelties

Sit aliquis peregrinus in eo forte loco, ubi perseverantes in observatione Quadragesimae, nec quinta sabbati

Suppose that some stranger is by chance in a place where men, persevering in the observance of

[1] To make the rather hesitating and involved argument of Augustine more clear, headings are introduced, and in the English version italic is used to bring out the principal points. To avoid misrepresentation, the translation is literal and bald. The text is from Migne, vol. xxxiii. pp. 199 *seq.*

lavant, relaxantve jejunium : Non (inquit) hodie jejunabo. Quaeritur causa : Quia non fit (inquit) in patria mea. Quid aliud ille, nisi consuetudinem suam consuetudini alterius praeponere conatur ? Non enim mihi de Libro Dei hoc recitaturus est, aut universae quacumque dilatatur Ecclesiae plena voce certabit, aut ostendet istum contra fidem facere, se autem secundum fidem, moresque hinc optimos aut illum violare, aut se custodire, convincet. Violant sane quietem et pacem suam de superflua quaestione rixando. Mallem tamen in rebus hujusmodi, ut et ille in hujus, et hic in illius patria, ab eo quod caeteri faciunt non abhorreret. Si vero in aliena patria cum peregrinaretur, ubi major et frequentior [1] et ferventior est populus Dei, vidit, verbi gratia, bis offerri quinta sabbati hebdomadae ultimae Quadragesimae, et mane et ad vesperam, veniensque in patriam suam, ubi in fine diei mos est offerri, male atque illicite fieri contendat, quoniam alibi aliter ipse viderit, puerilis est iste

Lent, do not bathe on Thursday, nor relax the fast : 'I shall not fast to-day,' he says. The reason is asked. 'Because,' he says, 'it is not done in my country.' What else is he doing but attempting to place his own custom before the custom of another ? For he will not be able to claim this from the Book of God ; nor can he prove his contention by the full voice of the universal Church wherever it is spread ; nor will he show that the other is acting against the faith, but he in accordance with the faith ; nor will he prove from this that the other is breaking while he is keeping good morals. They really are breaking peace and quiet by quarrelling about an unimportant question. I should prefer, then, in matters of this kind, that neither should stand aloof from what the other is doing in his own country. If, however, when a man was staying in a foreign country, where the people of God were more numerous and more crowded [1] and more zealous, he saw, for example,

[1] Here he suggests that the custom in some places of having two Communions on Maundy Thursday is due to the number of communicants. Later on (p. 125) he gives quite a different reason.

sensus, cavendus in nobis, tolerandus in aliis, corrigendus in nostris.

that on Maundy Thursday the offering was made twice, both morning and evening, and when he comes to *his own country,* where the custom is *to make the oblation at the end of the day,* —if he then contend that this is ill and unlawfully done, since *he* has seen another custom elsewhere, this is a puerile opinion, to be avoided by ourselves, borne with in strangers, corrected in our own people.

The Questions of Januarius

Prima ergo inquisitio tua, quam in commonitorio posuisti, ex quo trium istorum generum sit, attende. Quaeris enim his verbis :—

Quid per quintam feriam ultimae hebdomadis Quadragesimae fieri debeat, an offerendum sit mane, et rursus post coenam, propter illud quod dictum est, *Similiter postquam coenatum est* ?

An jejunandum, et post coenam tantummodo offerendum ? [1]

An etiam jejunandum, et post oblationem, sicut facere solemus, coenandum ? [2]

Therefore consider now to which of the three kinds your first question in your list of enquiries refers. For your questions run thus :—

[1] What ought to be done on Maundy Thursday ? Must we offer *in the morning and again after supper,* because of that which was said, ' In like manner after Supper ' ?

[2] *Or,* must we fast, and offer *only after supper* ? [1]

[3] *Or* again, must we fast, and, as we have been accustomed, *sup after the oblation* ?[2]

[1] It is of course the Lenten fast that he means, the Communion being received after the penitential fast has been broken by supper.

[2] This, then, was the custom at Hippo, to communicate before supper, but after a light meal, as he states on p. 124.

There is no Definite Answer

Ad haec itaque ita respondeo, ut quid horum sit faciendum, si divinae Scripturae praescribit auctoritas, non sit dubitandum quin ita facere debeamus ut legimus, ut jam non quomodo faciendum sed quomodo sacramentum intelligendum sit, disputemus.

To this, then, I would answer thus—that there would be no question which of these should be done, if the authority of divine Scripture prescribed it; but that we should do as we read, so that now we should not be arguing about how the sacrament should be done, but about how the sacrament should be understood.

Similiter etiam si quid horum tota per orbem frequentat Ecclesia: nam et hinc quin ita faciendum sit, disputare insolentissimae insaniae est. Sed neque hoc neque illud inest in eo, quod tu quaeris.

Similarly, if the whole Church throughout the world always did one of these things. For also in this case it would be a mark of most arrogant madness to doubt that it ought to be so done. But neither the one nor the other of these points is in the question you ask.

Restat igitur ut de illo tertio genere sit, quod per loca regionesque variatur. Faciat ergo quisque quod in ea Ecclesia in quam venit, invenerit. Non enim quidquam eorum contra fidem fit, aut contra mores, hinc vel inde meliores.[1] His enim causis, id est aut propter fidem, aut propter mores, vel

It remains, then, that it must be of that third kind which varies with places and regions. Let each, therefore, do whatever he finds in that Church to which he has come. For none of these is done against faith or morals—better in this way or that.[1] If it were indeed a matter of faith or

[1] He thus states that there are three ways of observing Maundy Thursday, two of which involve communion after supper, and one after a refection, and that no one way is better than the other.

emendari oportet quod perperam fiebat, vel institui quod non fiebat. Ipsa quippe mutatio consuetudinis, etiam quae adjuvat utilitate, novitate perturbat. Quapropter quae utilis non est, perturbatione infructuosa consequenter noxia est.

morals, then either that should be amended which used to be done, or that be started which used not to be done. Yet the very change of a custom, even though it helps by its usefulness, disturbs by its novelty. Therefore that which is not useful is in consequence injurious by unfruitful disturbance.

II. The Main Argument

The Service was originally after Supper

Nec ideo putari debet institutum esse multis locis, ut illo die post refectionem offeratur, quia scriptum est, *Identidem et calicem post coenam dicens*, etc. Ipsam enim potuit appellare coenam, qua jam corpus acceperant,[1] ut deinde calicem acciperent. Apostolus namque alibi dicit, *Convenientibus ergo vobis in unum, non est dominicam coenam manducare*, hanc ipsam acceptionem Eucharistiae dominicam coenam vocans. Illud magis movere potuit homines, utrum jam refecti die illa vel offerrent vel sumerent Eucharistiam, quod in Evangelio dicitur, *Cum autem illi manducarent ac-*

Nor ought it to be supposed that the oblation is made after a refection in many places on that day, because it was written, 'Likewise the cup after supper, saying,' etc. For one could give the name of supper to that in which they had just received the body,[1] so that thereafter they should receive the cup. For the Apostle elsewhere says, 'When ye come together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper,' calling this very receiving of the Eucharist the Lord's Supper. That saying which is in the Gospel might the more influence men, as to whether on that day they should

[1] A fantastic argument! But Augustine sees that it will not do (it must be remembered that it is only a letter he is writing), and drops it at the end of the paragraph.

cepit Jesus panem et benedixit; cum etiam superius dixisset: *Cum sero autem factum esset, recumbebat cum duodecim, et manducantibus eis dixit, Quoniam unus ex vobis tradet me.* Postea enim tradit Sacramentum.

offer or receive the Eucharist just after a meal,—'But when they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it'; since also he had said before, 'But when it was evening he sat down with the twelve, and while they were eating, he said, One of you shall betray me.' For after this he gave the Sacrament. And it is certainly clear that when the disciples first received the body and blood of the Lord, *they received not fasting.*

[**Here Gratian's extract begins**]
Et liquido apparet quando primum acceperunt discipuli corpus et sanguinem Domini non eos accepisse jejunos.

But this has been changed
(*Here follows the passage so often quoted*)

Numquid tamen propterea calumniandum est universae Ecclesiae [1] quod a jejunis [2] semper accipitur? Ex hoc enim *placuit Spiritui Sancto,*[3] ut in honorem tanti sacramenti in os Christiani prius

But must we on that account blame the whole Church,[1] because it is always received by fasting men?[2] Nay, but for this reason, 'it seemed good to the Holy Ghost'[3] that, in honour of

[1] See p. 69. There was nothing unusual in speaking of Hippo as the whole Church. The Council at Sardica did so A.D. 347, and other councils.

[2] *A jejunis,* 'by fasting men,' does not mean 'by men who have had nothing to eat,' but by men who have not had dinner. *Jejunus,* it must always be remembered, means *non pransus.* See pp. 69, 73: another example from Augustine himself (in his Letter to Casulanus) is *In hujus Sabbati jejunis sive prandio,* 'fasting or after dinner.' It is significant that in the quotation of these words by the Council of Trullo 'sober' takes the place of 'fasting' in the Latin version, though the Greek has νηστικῶν: *Carthaginensis synodi canon dicit, ut sancta altaris non nisi sobriis hominibus peraguntur.* Labbe and Cossart, *Sacrosancta Concilia,* VII. col. 1359, Venetiis, 1729.

[3] *Placuit Spiritui Sancto* means that it was a new rule, and refers to the Council at Hippo. See p. 72. The whole letter is of course based on this Council.

Dominicum corpus intraret quam caeteri cibi:[1] nam ideo per universum orbem[2] mos iste servatur. Neque enim quia post cibos dedit Dominus, propterea pransi aut coenati[3] fratres ad illud sacramentum accipiendum convenire debent aut sicut faciebant quos Apostolus arguit et emendat, mensis suis ista miscere. Namque Salvator quo vehementius commendaret mysterii illius altitudinem, ultimum hoc voluit altius infigere cordibus et memoriae discipulorum, a quibus ad passionem digressurus erat.[4] Et ideo non praecepit quo deinceps ordine sumeretur ut Apostolis, per quos Ecclesias dispositurus erat, servaret hunc locum.

so great a sacrament, the Lord's body should enter the mouth of a Christian *before other food*:[1] for on that account this custom is observed throughout the whole world.[2] Nor indeed because the Lord gave it *after food*, therefore ought the brethren to meet to receive that sacrament *after dinner or supper*,[3] or mingle it with their tables, as they did whom the Apostle blames and corrects. For the Saviour, that he might the more earnestly commend the depth of that mystery, wished to fix this last upon the hearts and memory of his disciples, from whom he was to depart to his passion.[4] And on this account he did not teach in what order it should hereafter be taken, in order to reserve this

[1] 'Should take the precedence of all other food' is the mistranslation in *Fasting Reception* (p. 15). But what Augustine is saying is that although the Lord gave it after a meal, they now receive it before food instead of after; and he goes on to explain that this means they are not obliged to receive after the *prandium* or after the *coena* because of the Lord's example. His expression is a usual one, as, *e.g.*, when we say, 'Do not take exercise after food.'

[2] This was probably not true. See p. 80.

[3] The question of the supper on Maundy Thursday is the subject of his letter, and is in his mind throughout. He speaks of the two heavy meals of the day, and does not for a moment mean that no refreshment should be taken before communion—a practice which he approves later on. See p. 124.

[4] There is of course no evidence for this, and it is highly improbable.

Nam si hoc ille monuisset ut post cibos alios semper acciperetur, credo quod eum morem nemo variasset.[1]

[**Here Gratian's extract ends.**]

matter for the Apostles by whom he was about to order the Churches.

For if he had told them this, that it should always be received after other food, I believe that none would have changed that custom.[1]

The change was due to S. Paul [2]

Cum vero ait Apostolus de hoc sacramento loquens, *Propter quod, fratres, cum convenitis ad manducandum, invicem expectate, si quis esurit, domi manducet, ut non ad judicium conveniatis ;* statim subtexuit : *Caetera autem cum venero, ordinabo.* Unde intelligi datur (quia multum erat ut in epistola totum illum agendi ordinem insinuaret, quem universa per orbem servat Ecclesia) ab ipso ordinatum esse quod nulla morum diversitate variatur.

When, however, the Apostle, speaking of this sacrament, says, 'Wherefore, brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another, and if any hunger, let him eat at home, that ye come not together for condemnation,' he at once added, 'But the rest will I set in order when I come.' Whence we may understand (since it was too much that he should suggest in an epistle the whole order of procedure which is observed by the whole Church throughout the world) that that was set in order by him which is not varied by any difference of customs.

[1] We now know that they did not change the custom.

[2] In this paragraph Augustine, in attempting to find a reason for the change made by the Council of Hippo, expounds his chief error, an error which was repeated by one writer after the other until our own time.

But Maundy Thursday is an exception in some places

Sed nonnullos probabilis quaedam ratio[1] delectavit, ut uno certo die per annum, quo ipsam Coenam Dominus dedit, tanquam ad insigniorem commemorationem, post cibos offerri et accipi liceat corpus et sanguinem Domini.

But a certain reasonable opinion[1] has found favour with some, that on the one fixed day in the year on which the Lord gave the Supper, as if for a more striking commemoration, the body and blood of the Lord might be offered and received after food.

He personally prefers the Communion to be after the usual light refection which ended the daily Lenten fast at 3 p.m.

Honestius autem arbitror ea hora fieri, ut qui etiam jejunaverit, post refectionem quae hora nona fit,[2] ad oblationem possit occurrere. Quapropter neminem cogi-

But I think this had better be done at such an hour, that he who has also kept the fast may come to the oblation *after the refection which is customary at three o'clock.*[2]

[1] So far from abrogating the Communion after supper on Maundy Thursday, as Thomas Aquinas fancied (because he did not read the letter itself), he calls it a reasonable custom, though he prefers himself that of having the *prandium* after.

[2] Here Augustine definitely recommends communion after food. He does so quite simply and as a matter of course. The idea of fasting-communion has not even occurred to him.

How was this difficulty to be got over?

1. The mediæval writers, whom Aquinas followed, quoted another part of the letter, and did not notice this, the crucial passage.

2. Some (*e.g.* Dr. Bright) gave the right translation (which is in the Benedictine edition), but shut their eyes to it.

3. Some MSS. adopted the simple method of altering *post* to *ante*. This got into the translation in Clark's Edinburgh edition, 1872.

4. J. H. Blunt in his *Theological Dictionary* (under the word 'Fasting') adopted the more subtle course of making nonsense of it by translating:—'But I think it is better to observe the hour and remain fasting until after the refection, which takes place at three o'clock before coming to the oblation.'

5. *Fasting Reception* uses Clark's version in ignorance of the Latin, and, no doubt innocently, has 'before the repast.' *Cf.* p. 74.

mus ante dominicam illam coenam prandere,[1] sed nulli etiam contradicere audemus.

Wherefore we compel none to have dinner[1] before that Lord's Supper, but we dare forbid none.

Here he gives another reason for the late Maundy Communion

Hoc tamen non arbitror institutum, nisi quia plures et prope omnes in plerisque locis eo die lavare consuerunt. Et quia nonnulli etiam jejunium custodiunt, mane offertur propter prandentes, quia jejunia simul et lavacra tolerare non possunt; ad vesperam vero propter jejunantes.[2] Si autem quaeris cur etiam lavandi mos ortus sit: nihil mihi de hac re cogitanti probabilius occurrit, nisi quia baptizandorum corpora per observationem Quadragesimae sordidata, cum offensione sensus ad fontem tractarentur, nisi aliqua die lavarentur. Istum autem diem potius ad hoc electum, quo coena dominica anniversarie celebratur. Et quia

Yet I think that this was originated because many, and almost all in most places, were accustomed to *bathe* on that day. And because some also kept the [Lenten] fast, there was a morning offering for those who were having dinner, because they could not bear fasting and the use of the bath at the same time; and one at evening for the sake of those who kept the fast.[2] But if you also ask why the custom of bathing arose, nothing seems to me more probable, as I think of it, than that the bodies of those who were to be baptized, *befouled by the keeping of Lent*, would be handled at the font with offence to the senses, unless they bathed on some day.

[1] Bright in Liddon's *Evening Communions*, p. 30, London, 1874, confuses the meaning by translating *prandere* 'to take his morning meal,' and therefore tells his readers that Augustine favoured a 'morning Celebration.' The *prandium* was at noon.

[2] Both this reason and that given by him on p. 117 must be wrong. Communion in the evening after supper, once general (which he did not know), was retained on Maundy Thursday, in imitation of the Last Supper, when it was dropped on other days during the second century.

concessum est hoc Baptismum accepturis, multi cum his lavare voluerunt, jejuniumque relaxare.

But for this that day was rather chosen when the anniversary of the Lord's Supper is celebrated, and because this concession was made to those who were going to receive baptism, many wished to bathe with them, and to relax the fast.

His ut potui disputatis, moneo, ut ea quae praelocutus sum serves quantum potes, ut decet Ecclesiae prudentem et pacificum filium.

Having discussed this as well as I could, I exhort you to observe as far as you may what I have said, as becomes a prudent and peaceful son of the Church.

The Relevant Passage in S. Ambrose

The passage from S. Ambrose (*In Psalmum* CXVIII., viii. 48) is so important as bearing on the meaning of Augustine's mention of food before communion that we print here the original of the passage mentioned on pp. 57-8, and referred to on p. 78.

Communion even after the Lent fast is broken by the prandium

Indictum est jejunium; cave ne negligas. Et si te fames quotidianum cogit ad prandium, aut intemperantia declinat jejunium; tamen coelesti magis te servato convivio. Non epulae paratae extorqueant, ut coelestis sis vacuus sacramenti.

The [Lenten] fast has been proclaimed; take care you do not neglect it. *And if hunger forces you to a daily dinner,* or intemperance drops the fast, then *preserve yourself all the more by the heavenly feast.* Do not let the feasts which have been prepared pervert you to be empty of the heavenly sacrament.

On some Lent days the Communion is quite soon after midday, so you will not have long to wait

Differ aliquantulum ; non longe finis est diei ; immo plerique sunt ejusmodi dies ; ut statim meridianis horis adveniendum sit in ecclesiam, canendi hymni celebranda oblatio. Tunc utique paratus adsiste ; ut accipias tibi munimentum ; ut corpus edas domini Jesu, in quo remissio peccatorum est ; postulatio divinae reconciliationis . et protectionis aeternae.

Delay a little while ; the end of the day is not far off ; nay, many days are of the kind when men come to church directly after midday, and hymns are sung and the oblation celebrated. Then at least stand ready, that you may receive your defence, that you may eat the body of the lord Jesus, in which is remission of sins, the claim of divine reconciliation, and eternal protection.

Evening communion as a safeguard

Suscipe ante dominum Jesum tuae mentis hospitio : ubi corpus ejus, ibi Christus est. Cum hospitium tuum adversarius viderit occupatum coelestis fulgore praesentiae, intelligens locum tentamentis suis interclusum esse per Christum, fugiet ac recedet : et tu mediam noctem sine ulla offensione transibis.

Receive beforehand the lord Jesus into the guest-chamber of your mind ; where his body is, there Christ is : for when the adversary sees your guest-chamber filled with the splendour of the heavenly presence, he will see that the room for his temptations has been blocked up by Christ, and will fly and retire ; and you will pass the middle of the night without any offence.

As a reminder through the night

Admonet etiam sacrificium vespertinum ut nunquam Christum obliviscaris. Non potes oblivisci cum lectum adscendis, ejus Domini cui in occasu diei precem fuderis, qui esurientem te sui corporis epulis expleverit. Etenim quod vesperi cogitaveris, cito dum evigilaveris recensebis. Excitabit te ipse dominus Jesus; admonebit ut surgas et eo tempore arma orationis adsumas, quo solet incursare tentator.

The evening sacrifice also admonishes you never to forget Christ. When you go to bed you cannot forget that Lord to whom in the fall of the day you poured out your prayers, who has filled you as you hungered with the feast of his body. And indeed what you have thought of in the evening you will speedily remember when you wake up. The lord Jesus himself will call you; he will admonish you to rise and put on the armour of prayer at that time when the tempter is wont to attack.

INDEX

Ablutions, 95-8
Abstinence, 59, 106
African Church, 23, 70
Afternoon communions, 52-3
Agapè, 19-25, 80
Agde, Council of, 7
Ambrose, 57-8, 78, 126-8
Anastasius Siniata, 83
Anglican examples of fasting-communion, 108-15
Anglican teaching, 7, 104-8
Anglo-Saxon canons, 89-92
Annual communion, 7
Anthony, 66
Apostles, 19-26
Apostolic Constitutions, 55
Aquinas, 101-4
Armenian Church, 23
Augustine, 24, 67-78, 116-26
Augustine, influence of, 83, 112
Auxerre, Council of, 86

Baptism of adults, 62, 94, 106
Baptismal rites, 54
Bartholomew of Brescia, 99
Basil, 51, 58-9
Bath in Lent, 30, 125
Benedict XIV., 41
Benson, Archbishop, 107
Bithynia, 42, 45
Bollandist, 41
Braga, Councils of, 84-6
Breaking of bread, 19
Bright, Dr. W., 29, 65 etc., 77, 114
Brightman, Dr. F. E., 39, 54

Cabrol, F., 46
Canon law, 92, 105, 114
Canterbury Convocation, 107
Capitularies, 94
Carranza, 38, 105
Carthage, Council at, 69
Catacombs, 21
Catechism, 106
Charles V., 103
Christ and fasting, 14-18, 104
Chrysostom, 40, 61-3
Clement of Rome, 37, 95
Coena, 60
Collins, Bp. W. E., 92.
Communicants, decrease of, 4, 6-9
Communicants, percentage of, 8
Connolly, B. H., 38, 82
Constance, Council of, 103, 105
Conybeare, F. C., 22-3
Cosin, R., 109
Cyprian, 50

Damiani, Peter, 97
Day, beginning of, 103
Decretum, 99, 105
Devonshire Rebels (1549), 7
Devotional aspect, 9-13, 114
Didachè, 21, 44, 47
Dispensations, 103-4
Dorotheos, 66
Drunkenness, 35, 59, 61, 67, 86-91, 94, 101
Duchesne, L., 20, 22
Durham, Council at, 97

Early celebrations, 3, 64, 92, 114
Easter communion, 7, 55
Eastern Church, 36
Egyptian ascetics, 65-6
Egyptian late communion, 79-80
English Church Union, 12
Epiphanius, 51, 64
Etheria, 52
Eucharist, 19, 46 etc.

Evening communions, 18, 19, 20, 52-3, 58, 79, 81, 127-8

False decretals, 38
Fasting after communion, 61, 94
Fasting before baptism, 62, 94
Fasting, original meaning, 26, 34, 93, 121
Fasting, penitential, 25, 34, 57-8, 61, 65-6, 126-7
Fasting, uses of the word, 33-6
'Fasting-communion,' the term, 32
Forgeries, 37-41, 65 etc.
'Fractio Panis' fresco, 21, 47

Gavantus, 37
Gratian, 99-100
Gratian, extract from Augustine, 121-3
Gregory Nazianzen, 59-60
Gregory of Tours, 86
Gwatkin, H. M., 22, 25, 44

Hall, F., 30, 32 etc.
Hierurgia Anglicana, 110
Hippo, Council at, 67-70
Hippolytus, 38, 55
Homilies, 107
Hor, Abbot, 65
Hutchinson, R., 108
Hymn at cockcrow, 47

Ignatius, 21
Illiberis, Council of, 26
Innocent III., 97
Innovations, 71, 116-18
Interpolations in N.T., 25
Isaac the Great, 65
Isidore of Nitria, 66
Isidore of Seville, 34, 83

Jantaculum, 60
Januarius, the letter to, 70-8, 116-26
Jejunus, 73, 121
Joannes Teutonicus, 99
Johnson, Dr., 113
Justin Martyr, 22, 26

Keble, J., 114

Lake, E., 111
Lateran Council (1215), 7
Law-courts, 35, 67
Lent: *see* Penitential, 26, 34, 61
Leo I., 27
Liddon, H. P., 29, 74
Lombard, Peter, 98
Louis XV., 103
Lyndwood, 105

Macarius, 66
Maclean, Bishop A. J., 39
Mâcon, Council of, 87
Materialism, 9, 10, 107
Maundy, 71, 73, 89
Meals, ancient, 60, 108
Midnight, the, rule, 35, 103
Milk and honey, 54
Montanism, 26
Morning Service, 2
Mortal sin, 12, 115

Nazarites, 59
New Prayer Book, 106
Nicaea, 38
Nicetas, 60
Night communions, 20, 46, 51

Old Latin versions, 45
Ordo Romanus I., 52, 96
Oxford, Council at, 97

Paradise of the Holy Fathers, 66
Paul, S., 19, 24, 31, 42, 78, 123
Penitential fasting, 25, 34, 57-8, 61, 65-6, 126-7
Peter of Blois, 53
Pharisaism, 31, 64
Piscinas, 96
Placuit Spiritui Sancto, 72, 121
Pliny the Elder, 67
Pliny the Younger, 24, 42-7
Prandium, 60, 69
Pransus, 73, 121
Prayer Book, 106
Prayer Book Order, 4-6, 7
Presbyterians, 33

Pretender, Old, 103
Priscillianism, 84-6
Privation, 33
'Procter and Frere,' 42
Pseudo-Clement, 37, 95, 96
Pseudo-Hippolytus, 38, 81
Pseudo-Isidore, 38
Pseudo-Leo, 95, 96
Psychological aspects, 9, 27, 104
Ptolemy of the Klimax, 66
Puller, F. W., 29-30, 32, 52, 94
Pusey, E. B., 3, 114-15

Reformers, 105, 108
Reservation, 49
Reverence, 10

Sacramentum, 45-6
Sarum books, 98
Seligenstadt, Council at, 94
Sermons, 92
Sick persons, 103-4
Socrates the historian, 26, 80
Soter, 38, 105
Sozomen, 79-80
Sparrow, Bishop, 112
Spiritual aspects, 10
'Spuriosities,' 41
Spurious passages in N.T., 25
Strabo, 93
Sub-apostolic period, 22
Supper, Last, 18
Supper, Lord's, 18, 19

Taylor, Jeremy, 112-13
Temptation of Christ, 14
Tertullian, 23, 26, 45, 48-9
Test Act, 7
Testamentum Domini, 56
Theodulph of Orleans, 52
Theophilus of Alexandria, 63-4
Time of service, 47-53
Timothy of Alexandria, 39
Toledo, Council of, 88
Tractarians, 113-15
Troas, 20
Trullo, Council of, 24, 88

Vatican, 104
Verona Fragment, 55

Waterland, D., 113
Wilberforce, Bishop Samuel, 42
Wilpert, G., 21
Women, 4
Wordsworth, Bishop John, 49, 51, 82

York, Convocation of, 107

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